



# November Commission Meeting

November 20, 2020

Iowa

# Meeting Book - November Commission Meeting

## November 2020 Agenda

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Mark  
Wiederspan

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Yes

Commissioner  
Mulholland  
Commissioner  
Mulholland

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Yes

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Allen  
Goody

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Yes

Elizabeth  
Sedrel

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Prasanna  
Bujimalla  
Carolyn  
Small  
Elizabeth  
Sedrel  
Laura  
Ingleby/Wade  
Leuwerke

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Commissioner  
Fitzgibbon  
Commissioner  
Ash

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### 7. Commissioner Comments

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### 8. Adjournment

UPCOMING MEETING DATES:  
January 22, 2021  
March 19, 2021 (by telephone)  
May 14, 2021

# **IOWA COLLEGE STUDENT AID COMMISSION**

## **Executive Director's Report**

**November 20, 2020**

### **Course to College**

Like most events in 2020, our College Application Week went virtual. It launched September 18 in conjunction with national #WhyApplyDay. From September 20 through 24, we held 21 informational sessions for high school students. The 28 presenters represented 18 partners, including colleges, employers, nonprofit organizations, Iowa College Aid, and other state agencies. September 25 and 26, 45 colleges took part in a virtual college fair, which was so successful that we're planning another one to take place [November 16-19](#).

On the evening of November 11, Iowa College Aid co-hosted a live Facebook event with the Iowa College Access Network (ICAN) on how to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). In addition to walking participants through the application, panelists addressed common questions about dependent status, unmarried parents, income and assets, and the IRS Data Retrieval Tool. About 300 people watched in real time, and by the following morning, close to 450 people had seen the recording.

### **College & Career Readiness Academy**

We began a new session of the Iowa College & Career Readiness Academy on November 9. While registration for the September session was level with last year, November registrations rose by more than 50 percent. Courses offered this session are 101: Foundations of College and Career Readiness in Iowa, 201: Creating Iowa's College and Career Readiness Culture, 401: Planning and the District's Role in Creating a Student-Centered Career and Academic Plan, and 601: Advanced Equity Issues in Planning, Accessing and Financing Postsecondary Opportunities.

### **GEAR UP Iowa**

Along with GEAR UP programs around the country, we celebrated National GEAR UP Week September 21-25. We shared student success stories on social media, recognized the high schools that won the FAFSA Completion Challenge, and issued a news release that included praise for the program from Senator Charles Grassley and Representative Cindy Axne.

GEAR UP Week was also happy timing for us to learn that Iowa was one of nine states selected to receive a continuation award from the U.S. Department of Education. The supplemental \$232,740 will be used to evaluate outcomes for the GEAR UP Iowa 2.0 cohort through 2025.

Other GEAR UP news:

- At the end of October, our college partners reported that 1,468 of their students had been awarded the Karen Misjak GEAR UP Iowa Scholarship this fall.
- We held a virtual mental health forum October 28 with Melissa Nord, a licensed mental health counselor.

### **Grants & Scholarships**

The 2021-22 FAFSA and Iowa Financial Aid Application opened October 1. As of October 31<sup>st</sup>, 22,132 Iowans had filed the FAFSA, which is 6 percent lower than the number of FAFSAs filers at the same point last year. We are working with the Iowa Department of Education to determine the percentage of high school seniors in Iowa who have filed the FAFSA, and we will report this information as soon as it is available.

This year, for the first time, undergraduate FAFSA filers in Iowa are receiving automated emails introducing them to financial aid programs and the Virtual College Coach and encouraging them to file the IFAA if they haven't already. In the month after we began sending the emails, 317 students opted in to the Virtual College Coach, compared to 968 who opted in during the first six months of 2020.

Also in early October, we released our 2019-20 Receipt of Multiple Scholarship and Grant Awards, detailing the number of students who "stacked" awards. A total of 19,870 students received 25,501 awards through 10 programs administered by Iowa College Aid. Of those, about 22 percent received awards from two or more programs, nearly double the percentage from last year. Find the full report [here](#).

The initial deadline for colleges to report fall financial aid data was October 15. As of that date, more than 17,500 Iowans had received scholarships/grants administered by Iowa College Aid for the fall term, totaling almost \$33.3 million. Of particular note: 6,697 Iowans had received the Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship, a 16.7 percent increase over the same time last year.

### **AmeriCorps**

The 2020-21 grant year for the AmeriCorps College Access and Success program officially began October 1. We have placed members at these host sites:

Success Coaches:

- Des Moines Area Community College-Ankeny (3 members)
- Des Moines Area Community College-Boone
- Des Moines Area Community College-Carroll
- Iowa Western Community College
- Southeastern Community College
- Southwestern Community College
- Iowa College Aid

Access Coaches:

- Davenport West High School
- Dubuque High School

Student Leaders:

- Cedar Falls High School (2 members)
- Wilton High School
- Muscatine High School (3 members)
- Holy Trinity High School-Fort Madison
- West Liberty High School (2 members)
- Maquoketa High School (2 members)

We are working with additional K-12 school districts and community colleges to recruit members for start dates in January and May.

## **LCANs**

Local College Access Networks held their annual convening, "Moving Forward Together," October 8-9 with more than 40 virtual participants and an average of more than 20 people per session. Participants heard from Iowa College Aid staff, two LCAN directors, Berea College's Partners for Education, and the Tamarack Institute. Videos of the sessions are available at [iowaCollegeAid.gov/LCANconvening](https://iowaCollegeAid.gov/LCANconvening).

## **Research**

In an effort to gauge the impact of COVID-19 on college enrollment decisions this fall, on October 27 we sent a survey to nearly 128,000 Iowans who filed the FAFSA for 2020-21. In addition to asking whether they enrolled, we asked recipients of state financial aid programs, such as the Iowa Tuition Grant and the Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship, whether such financial aid programs affected their college enrollment decisions.

As of November 6, we had received almost 10,000 survey responses. Roughly 90 percent of respondents indicated that they enrolled in college for the fall 2020 term. Among students who did enroll, 82 percent reported at least one COVID-related issue that affected their ability to pay for their postsecondary degree. The most common COVID-related issue was increased college costs due to remote online learning. Additionally, among students who enrolled in college and received state financial aid, approximately 57 percent reported that receipt of a state aid award did impact their decision to attend college.

### **Communications**

A new page on our agency website lists upcoming Iowa College Aid events. These are public-facing events that we are hosting or in which we play a major role. I encourage you to bookmark the list at [iowaCollegeAid.gov/UpcomingEvents](https://iowaCollegeAid.gov/UpcomingEvents).

# IOWA COLLEGE STUDENT AID COMMISSION

## Minutes of Meeting September 18, 2020

### **Members Present**

Michael Ash  
Manny Atwood  
Sherry Bates  
Tim Fitzgibbon

Melissa Hidalgo  
Katie Mulholland  
Mark Putnam

Herman Quirnbach  
Doug Shull  
Cindy Winckler

### **Members Absent**

Cecil Dolecheck  
Tim Kraayenbrink

Barbara Sloniker  
Emily Stork

Jeremy Varner

### **AG Present**

Emily Willits

### **Staff Present**

Todd Brown  
Prasanna Bujimalla  
Merima Dizdarevic  
Laura Ingleby

Julie Ntem  
Lisa Pundt  
Elizabeth Keest Sedrel

Christina Sibaouih  
Carolyn Small  
Mark Wiederspan

## **Call to Order**

The Iowa College Student Aid Commission met for a regularly scheduled meeting on September 18, 2020, via Zoom teleconference. Commission Chair Mulholland called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m. with roll call. A quorum was present.

## **Executive Director's Report**

Dr. Wiederspan announced that College Application week begins September 21, 2020. Iowa College Aid will provide a series of virtual events each day to allow high school students and the general public to ask questions and receive direct assistance on the college application process, as well as the process for completing the FAFSA. College Application week will conclude with a virtual two-day college application fair. Dr. Wiederspan acknowledged Jamie Covell, who organized the presentation topics, speakers, and marketing. In addition, he recognized the Communications Team, Tressa Schultz, Jamie Fisher, and Elizabeth Keest Sedrel, who provided technical assistance and promotional graphics.

Dr. Wiederspan focused the remainder of his Executive Director's report on Iowa College Aid's response to COVID-19. Staff continue to work remotely. The ways the agency interacts with higher education stakeholders have changed. Iowa College Aid Division leaders have consulted with respective staff to identify stakeholders and agency colleagues. A set of actions has been created to help the agency fulfill the goals of creating and maintaining ways to responsively and actively engage with stakeholders; maintaining measures that allow for a fiscally responsible and stable agency; and maintaining a flexible and safe work environment that fosters virtual collaboration and open communication, empowering staff to produce their absolute best. Dr. Wiederspan highlighted several action plans that the agency will undertake this fall.

A new system will automatically send an email to all Iowans who file the FAFSA and provide notification to them about Iowa College and its services, including state financial aid programs and the Virtual College Coach.

Dr. Wiederspan noted that the agency will expand virtual assistance to Iowans. This involves hosting virtual events that promote college access and success as well as providing assistance through text message coaching.

In collaboration with Iowa Board of Regents, Iowa Association of Community College Trustees, and Iowa Association of Independent College and Universities, the agency will

host a virtual event to educate state legislators about the current state of higher education in Iowa.

Iowa College Aid will work on cost-saving measures that modify existing agency contracts or services that the agency is no longer utilizing in a remote setting.

Lastly, Iowa College Aid will work to foster a work environment that allows the agency staff to collaborate with each other in remote settings. One example is the creation of scheduled “Collaborate and Learn” sessions that allow staff to present, in an all-staff setting, agency projects they are working on and ways other staff members could be involved.

### **Meeting Minutes**

Motion: Commissioner Ash moved to approve the July 17, 2020, Meeting Minutes as written. Commissioner Shull seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

### **Administrative Rules**

Mr. Brown provided context on the Administrative Rules Chapter 15, Future Ready Iowa Skilled Workforce Last-Dollar Scholarship; Chapter 14, Health Professional Recruitment Program; Chapter 24, Rural Iowa Primary Care Loan Repayment Program; Chapter 26, Health Care Loan Repayment Program; and Chapter 27, Rural Iowa Veterinarian Loan Repayment Program. The rules are now presented to the Board for adoption. Mr. Brown explained that there have been no changes to the rules since the Board approved them for notice during the July Commission Meeting. No public comments have been received. The Administrative Rules Review Committee reviewed each of the rules and expressed no concerns.

Motion: Commissioner Ash moved to adopt amendments to Administrative rules Chapter 15, Future Ready Iowa Skilled Workforce Last-Dollar Scholarship; Chapter 14, Health Professional Recruitment Program; Chapter 24, Rural Iowa Primary Care Loan Repayment Program; and Chapter 26, Health Care Loan Repayment Program; as well as the adoption of new Administrative Rule Chapter 27, Rural Iowa Veterinarian Loan Repayment Program. Commissioner Shull seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

### **Postsecondary Registration Compliance Enforcement**

Ms. Small and Ms. Willits provided the current status on Inspirit Institute as it relates the cease and desist order recommendation. Ms. Willits announced that Inspirit Institute is no longer maintaining a website. Under Chapter 261B.11, the Commission has the ability to regulate schools that have either a brick-and-mortar presence in Iowa or a presence through a website with an Iowa-facing component. Currently, the Inspirit website states that Inspirit Institute has permanently closed. Ms. Willits noted that based on current knowledge, there is no longer a brick-and-mortar presence or an internet-based presence for this school in Iowa. The current recommendation is to take no action on Inspirit Institute. However, Ms. Willits recommended leaving the item open in the event that the school may try to reopen.

Ms. Young, the owner of Inspirit Institute, provided her remarks to the Commission. She confirmed that Inspirit Institute is permanently closed. Ms. Young plans on teaching again in the future. However, she noted that she is unsure whether she will ever be able to own a school again. She stated that she is unsure what the future holds for her at this time.

In response to a question from Senator Quirnbach on the continuing financial obligation to students, Ms. Young stated that the two students who were in the process of completing the program when the school closed were past the point of receiving a refund. Ms. Young noted that she has capacity for the students to finish the program. However, Ms. Small stated that Inspirit Institute's application to operate as an exempt school in Iowa has been denied. Inspirit Institute does not have the authority to maintain any type of presence in Iowa. The two students who were unable to finish the program have the option to connect with a different massage therapy school to finish and receive their certification. However, Ms. Small noted that these students possibly do not have access to their transcripts from Inspirit Institute. Ms. Young indicated she is willing to provide students their transcripts and hours completed at Inspirit Institute.

Ms. Willits noted that this matter has been referred to the Consumer Protection Division at the Iowa Attorney General's Office. Ms. Small stated that the Consumer Protection Division has made a request of the Institute for documentation that would assist in determining whether students are owed a refund. This request is pending at this time. Ms. Small has requested documentation from Ms. Young that supports her assertion that the last two students who were enrolled at Inspirit Institute are not eligible for a refund under the Compliant Iowa Tuition Refund Policy and not the Noncompliant Policy that was in the Inspirit Institute catalog at the time it permanently closed. In addition, Ms. Small requested supporting documentation that lists the completed hours of the two student as well as the dates of their withdrawal. Ms. Young agreed to provide the requested documentation.

There we no additional comments at this time.

### **GEAR UP Iowa Scholarship**

Mr. Brown provided background on the recommended action to authorize staff to draw down up to \$4,500,000 from the Bankers Trust GEAR UP 2.0 Scholarship account for scholarships for GEAR UP 2.0 participants who will attend college in 2020-21. The GEAR UP 2.0 cohort was scheduled to graduate during the 2019-20 academic year. Each student in the cohort is eligible for a scholarship of up to \$600 per semester if they are enrolled full-time at any college or university in the United States during the 2020-21 academic year. A large number of GEAR UP 2.0 participants are projected to attend college and receive the award in the current state fiscal year. It is anticipated that the \$4,500,000 drawdown request will cover these scholarships.

Motion: Commissioner Shull moved to approve the recommended action to authorize staff to draw down up to \$4,500,000 from the Bankers Trust GEAR UP 2.0 Scholarship account for scholarships for GEAR UP 2.0 participants who will be attending college in 2020-21. Commissioner Fitzgibbon seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

### **Education and Training Voucher Agreement**

Mr. Brown provided background on the recommended action to authorize the Executive Director to extend the agreement with the Iowa Department of Human Services for the administration of the Education and Training Voucher (ETV) for the 10/1/2020 to 9/30/2021 term. This is the fifth and final extension to the agency's current six-year contract with Iowa Department of Human Services. In essence, Iowa Department of Human Services receives federal funding through a federal Chafee Grant, of which the

Education and Training Voucher is a part. The Education and Training Voucher is designed to provide grants to lowans who age out of Iowa foster care. Iowa Department of Human Services has contracted with Iowa College Aid to administer this grant program since the mid-2000s. The Department of Human Services provides all the funding for the grant awards and covers all the agency's administrative costs. Mr. Brown noted that last state fiscal year, the program served a little under 160 students with \$580,000 in funding to help pay for education. Mr. Brown reported there are no substantive changes to the contract, rather updates to the contract year as well as the federal grant number.

In response to a question from Senator Quirmbach in regard to how many people are eligible for the program, Mr. Brown noted that a waiting list is established in the fall of the academic year.

Motion: Commissioner Fitzgibbon moved to approve the recommended action to authorize the Executive Director to extend the agreement with the Iowa Department of Human Services for the administration of the Education and Training Voucher (ETV) for the 10/1/2020 to 9/30/2021 term. Commissioner Shull seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

### **Staff Reports**

Ms. Bujimalla provided updated financials through September 2020.

Ms. Small provided the report on postsecondary registrations, SARA, and exemptions. Ms. Small reported that recently six schools have either formally applied for SARA participation or have inquired about it. The schools' interest in SARA participation is related to a long-term interest in incorporating distance education in the schools' instruction methodologies. Provided that all six schools successfully complete the SARA application process, there will only be two remaining HLC-accredited degree-granting institutions left in the State of Iowa who are not SARA participants.

Dr. Ingleby presented "Education and Employment Outcomes for the Education and Training Voucher Program" to the Commission. A copy of the report is available on Iowa College Aid's website. In response to a question from Commissioner Bates in regard to how students are notified of their eligibility, Dr. Ingleby noted that once students fill out their FAFSA, they are directed to fill out the Iowa Financial Aid application. The information on their award will be included in their award letters from their college. There were no further questions at this time.

## **Audit and Finance Committee Report**

Commission Fitzgibbon provided background on the contract between Iowa College Student Aid Commission and Ascendium. Iowa College Aid receives a significant stipend from Ascendium based on the portfolio that was turned over in 2012. The funding is primarily based on recoveries of defaulted loans that were previously in the Commission's portfolio. The contract between Iowa College Aid and Ascendium expires on October 1, 2022. Due to COVID-19 and a current halt in collections, there has been a significant decrease in the monthly payment the agency receives. The Audit & Finance Committee is working on ways to document potential lost income and reach an agreement with Ascendium for modification of the contract. This would allow the Commission to receive what it would have otherwise received on collections. Commissioner Fitzgibbon explained that federally held loans were covered by the CARES Act and the President's executive order that allowed for a pause in payments and reduced interest rates to 0% through 2020. The Office of the General Counsel (OGC) for the Department of Education confirmed recently that FFELP loans were not covered by either the CARES Act or the executive order. It was voluntary for servicers to halt collections from FFELP borrowers over the past couple of months. Due to the decision by OGC, Ascendium plans to restart collections on student loans October 1, 2020. The outcome of the election could have an impact on this decision. If loan repayments start and are not halted in the future, the Commission most likely will be able to recoup what has been lost before the end of the contract. Commissioner Fitzgibbon recommended the development of a proposal, with the assistance of Emily Willits, that explains the Commission's request for the amounts that it would normally have received. Ascendium will eventually recoup these amounts themselves; therefore, there will be no loss to them.

## **Legislative Committee Report**

Mr. Brown provided context on the recommended action to authorize the Executive Director to initiate policy amendments to the All Iowa Opportunity Scholarship during the 2021 legislative session. In order for a student to be eligible to receive the All Iowa Opportunity Scholarship, the individual must attend and receive the scholarship within two years of completing high school. The student must continuously receive the scholarship in consecutive fall and spring semesters. If the student fails to attend a fall or spring semester after receiving the scholarship, the student loses eligibility in perpetuity. This amendment would allow for students to suspend their enrollment for a period of time, not to exceed two years, if they encounter an exceptional circumstances that inhibit their

ability to attend a semester after previously receiving the scholarship. If approved by the Commission and the General Assembly, exceptional circumstances will be defined in rules for the waiver process.

Motion: Commissioner Shull moved to approve the recommended action to authorize the Executive Director to initiate policy amendments to the All Iowa Opportunity Scholarship during the 2021 legislative session. Commissioner Ash seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

The next recommended action is to authorize the Executive Director to initiate policy amendments to the Teach Iowa Scholar Program during the 2021 legislative session. Currently, the Iowa College Student Aid Commission has administration authority for three programs for teachers in law. Two of those programs have been discontinued. The Teach Iowa Scholar Program is active and receives an appropriation of \$400,000 annually. However, there are still funds remaining in the corresponding two programs that have been discontinued. This amendment would allow for authority to utilize those funds to supplement the number of awards that can be made on an annual basis under the Teach Iowa Scholar Program.

Motion: Commissioner Fitzgibbon moved to approve the recommended action to authorize the Executive Director to initiate policy amendments to the Teach Iowa Scholar Program during the 2021 legislative session. Commissioner Shull seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Ms. Small provided context on the recommended action to authorize the Executive Director to initiate policy amendments related to postsecondary authorization during the 2021 legislative session. Amendments to Iowa Code Section 261B.8 expand the allowable use of moneys deposited in the postsecondary registration fund to help cover the losses of students whose schools close suddenly, as well as to procure and maintain student records.

Ms. Small explained that amendments to Iowa Code Chapter 714 are under the enforcement purview of the Iowa Attorney General's Office but are administered by the postsecondary registration team at the Iowa College Student Aid Commission. The amendments to Iowa Code Section 714.18 allow all small schools that collect \$500,000 or less in tuition annually to calculate a lesser bond. This proposed change expands existing legislative provisions that allow small cosmetology and barbering schools to

calculate a bond that is less than \$500,000. In addition, this amendment allows the Commission to accept a letter of credit from any school, not just cosmetology and barbering schools. The letter of credit could not be revoked without the permission of all parties, including the Commission.

Amendments to Iowa Code Section 714.19 clarify that exemptions to the proof of financial responsibility requirement are granted only to public colleges and universities who receive funding from, and are backed by the full faith and credit of, the state where they operate. In addition, they eliminate exemptions that are no longer applicable.

Amendments to Iowa Code Section 714.23 define payment periods to be consistent with federal student aid regulation. They also expand enforcement to include any for-profit school that offers a postsecondary education program that leads to a recognized credential, regardless of the length of time required. In addition, they reduce the 10% that a school may charge a withdrawn student to 5% and establish a two-week trial period when a student can withdraw with no charge. Furthermore, the amendments change the refund calculation for low/no default schools from a percentage of 60% of the term to a percentage of the entire term as well as clarifying applicability of this section to codify current practice, exempting non-credential schools and those that do not result in substantive cost to lowans.

Amendments to Iowa Code Section 714.24 codify current practice that for-profit schools that must file evidence of financial responsibility biannually must also demonstrate compliance with 714.23 and, if applicable, 714.25.

Amendments to Iowa Code Section 714.25 apply requirements to the same for-profit schools that are governed by changes to Section 714.23. It also eliminates the requirement for schools to report data to the Board of Cosmetology Arts and Sciences and the Board of Barbering, both of which have indicated they have no interest in the data. In addition, this amendment clarifies reporting periods for all schools are for the most recent program cohorts.

Motion: Commissioner Shull moved to approve the recommended action to authorize the Executive Director to initiate policy amendments related to postsecondary authorization during the 2021 legislative session to Iowa Code Section 261B.8, Chapter 714.18, Section 714.19, Section 714.23, Section 714.24, and Section 714.25. Commissioner Fitzgibbon seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Mr. Brown provided context on the recommended action to authorize the Executive Director to initiate new Iowa Code Section 261.8, authorizing the Commission to organize a nonprofit corporation, during the 2021 legislative session. Mr. Brown explained that currently the strategic operating fund is what funds and supports the majority of the services that the agency offers. In the future, when the strategic fund is limited or nonexistent, this recommendation provides a way to reduce future amounts of state funding that would be necessary to continue the services that the agency offers to Iowans. This bill would give the Commission the authority to organize a nonprofit corporation. During the last legislative session, House File 2291 was introduced by Representatives Winckler and Dolecheck. House File 2291 passed the House unanimously and is being used as a basis for this proposal. However, further specifications have been added for the purpose of clarifying that funds can be used for providing Iowans with educational financial assistance. In addition, they clarify that funds can be used for services to increase access and success in postsecondary education as well as for research. In the event that this bill is passed by the Iowa General Assembly during the 2021 legislative session and is enacted, there is further work to be done that includes the development of a 28E agreement. The agreement would provide specification around the organization, the powers, the purpose, and other requirements of the nonprofit corporation. In addition, it would specify the financing and budgetary methods, as well as how agreements between the two organizations could be formed and terminated.

The Commission agreed to the development of a 501(c)(3) subcommittee to discuss the specification of a 28E agreement and next steps on the development of a 501(c)(3) corporation. Due to legislative timing and time constraints in terms of formal approval from the Governor's office, the current recommended action is tabled. The Board of Commissioners will be scheduled to meet for a Special Commission Meeting in October to formally vote on initiating new Iowa Code 261.8, authorizing the Commission to organize a nonprofit corporation, during the 2021 legislative session.

Mr. Brown provided context on the recommended action to approve the Agency and Commission Board budget requests for FY2022. Each year, the Commission develops budget recommendations for the upcoming state fiscal year. Agency staff develop a recommendation that is largely guided by the Iowa Department of Management. In addition, the Commission Board traditionally submits a request to ask for money for specific purposes and needs. This is reflected in the 2022 commission requests.

Motion: Commissioner Bates moved to approve the recommended action to approve the Agency and Commission Board budget requests for FY2022. Commissioner Putnam seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

**Commissioner Comments**

Commissioner Shull moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Fitzgibbon seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 12:13 p.m.

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Katie Mulholland, Chair

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Doug Shull, Vice Chair

# IOWA COLLEGE STUDENT AID COMMISSION

## Minutes of Meeting October 8, 2020

### **Members Present**

Michael Ash  
Sherry Bates  
Tim Fitzgibbon  
Melissa Hidalgo

Katie Mulholland  
Mark Putnam  
Herman Quirmbach  
Doug Shull

Barbara Sloniker  
Emily Stork  
Jeremy Varner  
Cindy Winckler

### **Members Absent**

Manny Atwood

Cecil Dolecheck

Tim Kraayenbrink

### **AG Present**

Emily Willits

### **Staff Present**

Todd Brown  
Merima Dizdarevic

Julie Ntem  
Elizabeth Keest Sedrel

Christina Sibaouih  
Mark Wiederspan

## **Call to Order**

The Iowa College Student Aid Commission met for a special meeting on October 8, 2020, via Zoom teleconference. Commission Chair Mulholland called the meeting to order at 11:01 a.m. with roll call. A quorum was present.

## **Policy Development**

Mr. Brown provided background on the recommended action to authorize the Executive Director to initiate new Iowa Code Section 261.8, authorizing the Commission to organize a nonprofit corporation, during the 2021 legislative session. Following the September Commission meeting, a subcommittee met to review legislative language along with a 501(c)(3) memorandum and gathered recommended modifications to bring forward to the Commission Board. Mr. Brown highlighted the additions to the legislative language as recommended by the subcommittee. In subsection 1, "philanthropic" has been added to ensure that the intent of the source of grant seeking is captured in this language. Subsection 3 includes the addition of voting commission members who represent the Iowa Board of Regents as well as the Iowa Department of Education, to ensure that voting members of the Iowa College Student Aid Commission are reflected on the nonprofit board. Another addition to subsection 3 includes two openings for individuals who have nonprofit operation or funding experience. The addition to subsection 6 includes a requirement to create a 28E agreement to specify the role and responsibilities of the nonprofit corporation. It is further specified that the nonprofit corporation could enter into additional agreements with other entities to infill the provisions of the grants that might be sought under this section.

In response to a question from Commissioner Fitzgibbon on the clarification on Section 6, Mr. Brown explained that some grants require a nonprofit corporation to enter an agreement with another entity to ensure specifications within the grant funding are carried forth.

In response to a question from Commissioner Fitzgibbon, Dr. Wiederspan explained that the agency does not envision that this is a means to have a third party overtake anything. It provides flexibility in the agreements that might occur with grant funding.

Dr. Wiederspan addressed a few concerns raised by the Commission Board and the general public. First, Dr. Wiederspan explained that Iowa College Aid's Strategic Fund, known as the Operating funding when the agency was a guaranty agency, is still under the purview of the Higher Education Act and federal regulations. If Iowa College Aid

wished to transfer all of the Strategic Fund into the newly formed 501(c)(3) would not only require Board approval, but also permission from the U.S. Department of Education. Dr. Wiederspan explained that such actions risks the agency to lose the fund in its entirety. Therefore, the Strategic Fund will not be transferred in whole to this new corporation. Dr. Wiederspan did say that a portion of the fund could be used for certain purposes, such as grant matching, so long as it follows federal guidelines.

The second concern addressed whether the 501(c)(3) status for the agency would result in competition for fundraising with other nonprofit identities that also promote higher education in Iowa. Dr. Wiederspan explained that this concern is not unique to the agency's situation. The intention behind creating the 501(c)(3) is not to duplicate what other entities in Iowa are doing. Rather, Iowa College Aid's work has been recognized at both the national and state levels, and as a result, several foundations have expressed interest in supporting the agency's work financially. However, because Iowa College Aid does not have 501(c)(3) status, these foundations' charter prohibit them from financially supporting the agency. Dr. Wiederspan further explained

that Iowa College Aid currently has the ability to receive donations from the general public, and having a tax-exempt status would not change that aspect of receiving funds. However, it would change the agency's ability to receive foundational support. The 501(c)(3) status would provide an opportunity for the agency to work more closely with other nonprofit identities in Iowa that are promoting higher education.

Iowa College Aid has provided particular services and programs to Iowans with limited state support. Many services offered by the agency are targeted to low-income students and rural communities. Research conducted by Iowa College Aid is being used to help guide policy decisions at the state and national levels. Dr. Wiederspan noted that the 501(c)(3) would not solve all future financial concerns but would assist in prolonging the agency's ability to continue to provide services and programs.

There were no additional comments at this time.

Motion: Commissioner Shull moved to approve the recommended action to authorize the Executive Director to initiate new Iowa Code Section 261.8, authorizing the Commission to organize a nonprofit corporation during the 2021 legislative session. Commissioner Putnam seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

### **Commissioner Comments**

Commissioner Varner moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Ash seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 11:23 a.m.

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Katie Mulholland, Chair

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Doug Shull, Vice Chair

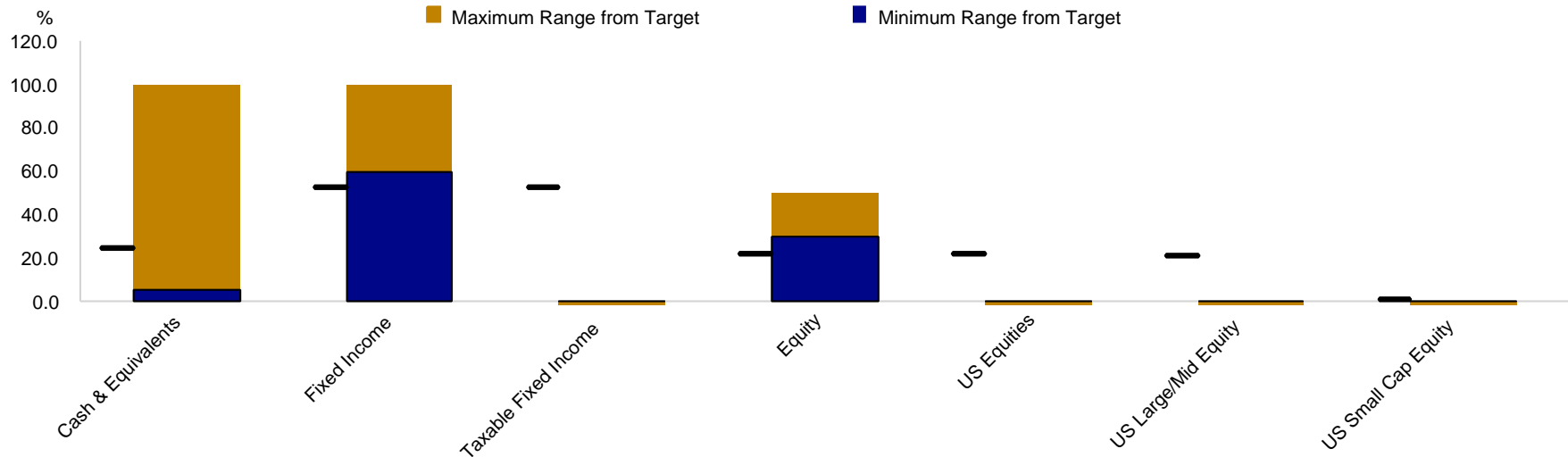
Gear Up 2.0

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Gear Up 2.0

DATA AS OF 09/30/2020

## Gear Up 2.0



	Market Value	Target Allocation	Range Minimum	Range Maximum	Actual Allocation	Variance
Cash & Equivalents	3,685,788	5.0	.0	100.0	24.9	19.9
Fixed Income	7,831,571	60.0	.0	100.0	52.9	-7.1
Fixed Income	7,831,571				52.9	52.9
Equity	3,294,198	30.0	.0	50.0	22.2	-7.8
US Equities	3,294,198				22.2	22.2
US Large/Mid Cap Equities	3,107,833				21.0	21.0
US Small Cap Equities	186,365				1.3	1.3
<b>Total Fund (Net)</b>	<b>14,811,557</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>.0</b>

\*\*\*All market values shown include accrued income.

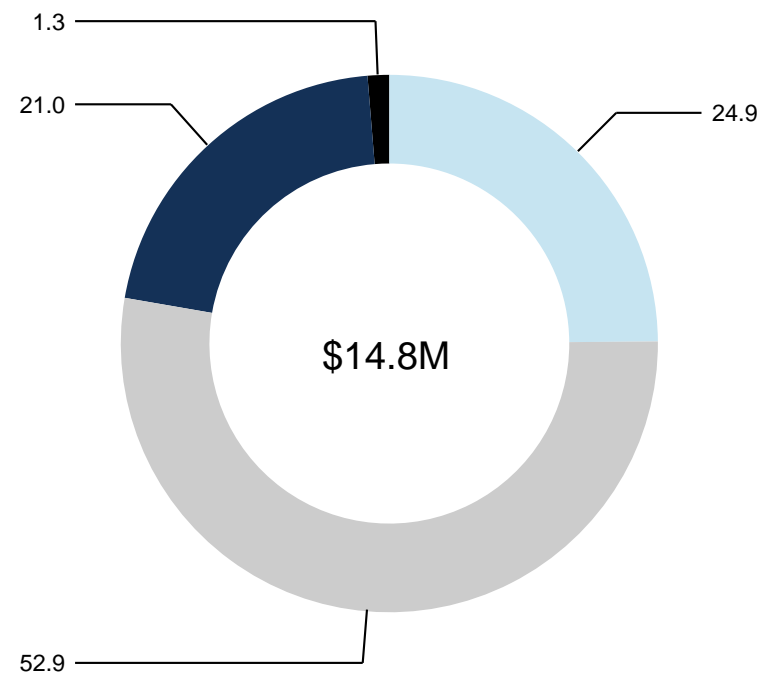
Source: BTC Capital Management, SEI Wealth Platform, First Rate, FactSet, Informa Performance IQ. Information has been obtained from sources deemed reliable, but BTC Capital Management, its affiliates or agents, cannot guarantee accuracy. Past performance is not indicative of future returns. Performance for periods exceeding 12-months has been annualized. Non-Deposit Investment Services are not insured by the FDIC or any government agency and are not bank guaranteed. They are not deposits of the bank and may lose value.



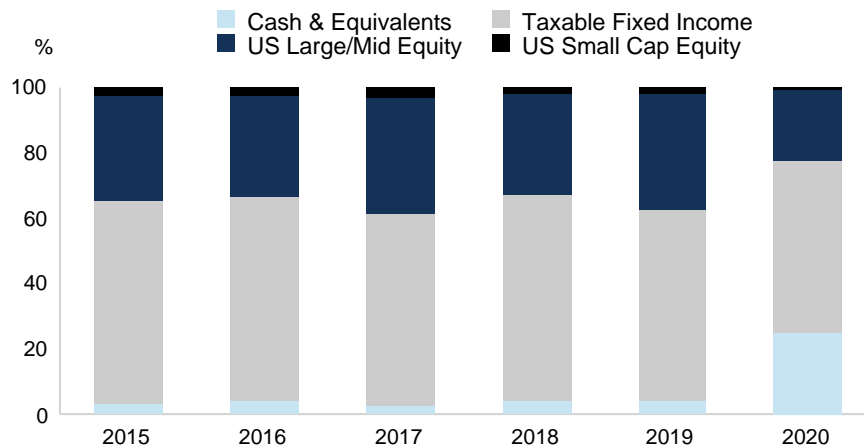
Gear Up 2.0

Asset Allocation

	Market Value	% of Mkt Val
Cash & Equivalents	\$ 3,685,788	24.9 %
Taxable Fixed Income	\$ 7,831,571	52.9 %
US Large/Mid Equity	\$ 3,107,833	21.0 %
US Small Cap Equity	\$ 186,365	1.3 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 14,811,557</b>	<b>100.0 %</b>



Annual Allocation



\*\*\*All market values shown include accrued income.

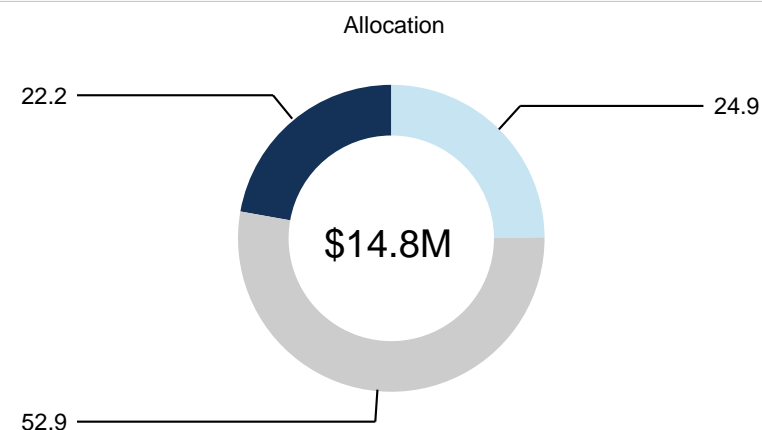
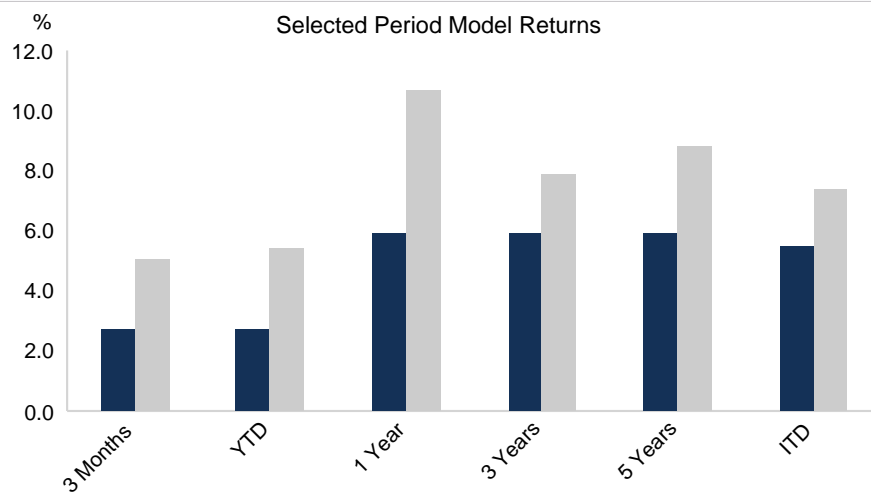
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## Account Return

As of: September 30, 2020

### Gear Up 2.0



	Market Value	% of Mkt Val	3 Months	Year to Date (9 Months)	1 Year	3 Years	5 Years	Inception to Date 08/01/2015
● <b>Total Fund (Net)</b>	\$ 14,811,557		2.68 %	2.72 %	5.93 %	5.94 %	5.88 %	5.49 %
● <i>Moderate Static Benchmark</i>			5.02 %	5.42 %	10.69 %	7.93 %	8.79 %	7.41 %
● <b>Cash &amp; Equivalents</b>	\$ 3,685,788	24.9 %	.02 %	.39 %	.66 %	1.34 %	.97 %	.94 %
● <i>BofAML US 3-Month T-Bill Ind</i>			.04 %	.64 %	1.10 %	1.69 %	1.20 %	1.16 %
● <b>Fixed Income</b>	\$ 7,831,571	52.9 %	.15 %	4.57 %	4.89 %	3.62 %	2.74 %	
● <i>BB US Aggregate Bond Index</i>			.62 %	6.79 %	6.98 %	5.24 %	4.18 %	4.15 %
● <b>US Equities</b>	\$ 3,294,198	22.2 %	8.53 %	2.83 %	11.35 %	11.27 %	12.62 %	11.41 %
● <i>MSCI USA IMI Index (Gross) (</i>			9.23 %	5.58 %	15.16 %	11.75 %	13.78 %	11.31 %

\*\*\*All market values shown include accrued income.

Source: BTC Capital Management, SEI Wealth Platform, First Rate, FactSet, Informa Performance IQ. Information has been obtained from sources deemed reliable, but BTC Capital Management, its affiliates or agents, cannot guarantee accuracy. Past performance is not indicative of future returns. Performance for periods exceeding 12-months has been annualized. Non-Deposit Investment Services are not insured by the FDIC or any government agency and are not bank guaranteed. They are not deposits of the bank and may lose value.



# Asset Class Returns

As of: September 30, 2020

## Gear Up 2.0

	Market Value	3 Months	Year to Date (9 Months)	1 Year	3 Years	5 Years	Inception to Date 08/01/2015
<b>Cash &amp; Equivalents</b>	<b>3,685,788</b>	<b>.02</b>	<b>.39</b>	<b>.66</b>	<b>1.34</b>	<b>.97</b>	<b>.94</b>
<i>BofAML US 3-Month T-Bill Index</i>		.04	.64	1.10	1.69	1.20	1.16
<b>Fixed Income</b>	<b>7,831,571</b>	<b>.15</b>	<b>4.57</b>	<b>4.89</b>	<b>3.62</b>	<b>2.74</b>	
<i>BB Interm US Government Index</i>		.20	5.96	5.98	4.04	2.76	2.83
<b>Equity</b>	<b>3,294,198</b>	<b>8.53</b>	<b>2.83</b>	<b>11.35</b>	<b>11.27</b>	<b>12.62</b>	<b>11.41</b>
<i>MSCI USA IMI Index (Gross)</i>		9.23	5.58	15.16	11.75	13.78	11.31
<b>US Equities</b>	<b>3,294,198</b>	<b>8.53</b>	<b>2.83</b>	<b>11.35</b>	<b>11.27</b>	<b>12.62</b>	<b>11.41</b>
<i>MSCI USA IMI Index (Gross) (USD)</i>		9.23	5.58	15.16	11.75	13.78	11.31
<b>US Large/Mid Cap Equities</b>	<b>3,107,833</b>	<b>8.90</b>	<b>3.88</b>	<b>12.52</b>	<b>12.51</b>	<b>13.67</b>	<b>12.43</b>
<i>MSCI USA Index (Gross) (USD)</i>		9.64	7.27	17.06	12.84	14.40	11.95
<b>US Small Cap Equities</b>	<b>186,365</b>	<b>2.78</b>	<b>-11.98</b>	<b>-5.21</b>	<b>1.76</b>	<b>6.68</b>	<b>5.60</b>
<i>MSCI USA Small Cap Index (Gross) (USD)</i>		5.60	-7.77	.23	3.50	8.94	6.38

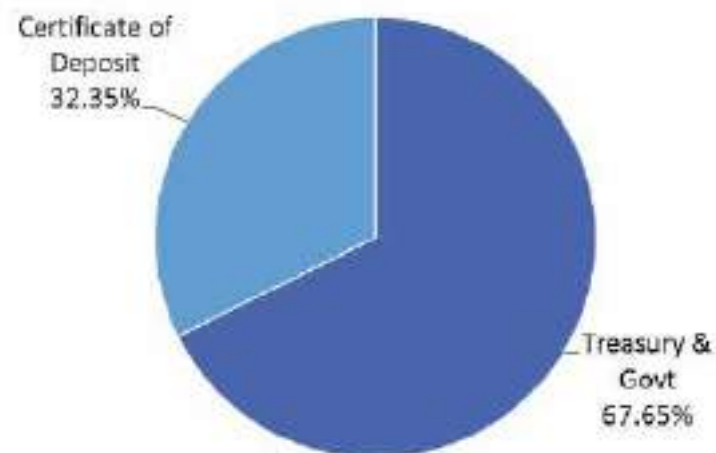
\*\*\*All market values shown include accrued income.

Source: BTC Capital Management, SEI Wealth Platform, First Rate, FactSet, Informa Performance IQ. Information has been obtained from sources deemed reliable, but BTC Capital Management, its affiliates or agents, cannot guarantee accuracy. Past performance is not indicative of future returns. Performance for periods exceeding 12-months has been annualized. Non-Deposit Investment Services are not insured by the FDIC or any government agency and are not bank guaranteed. They are not deposits of the bank and may lose value.

Fixed Income Characteristics	Portfolio	Barclays
		Intermediate Govt. Index
Yield to Maturity/Call	0.40%	0.26%
Current Yield	1.63%	1.76%
Avg. Quality	Aaa	AAA
Effective Duration (Years)	2.34	3.78

Sector Allocation	Portfolio	Barclays
		Intermediate Govt. Index
Treasury & Govt	67.7%	100.0%
Certificate of Deposit	32.3%	0.0%
<b>Total Fixed Income</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Sector Allocation



Source: BTC Capital Management, SEI World Platforms, FirstFund, FirstFund, Morning Performance IQ. Information has been obtained from sources deemed reliable, but BTC Capital Management, its affiliates or agents, cannot guarantee accuracy. Past performance is not indicative of future returns. Performance for periods exceeding 12 months has been annualized. Non-Deposited Investment Services are not insured by the FDIC or any government agency and are not bank-guaranteed. They are not deposits of the bank and may lose value.

# **IOWA COLLEGE STUDENT AID COMMISSION**

## **Color FX/Mittera Contract Extension & Request for Proposal**

**November 2020**

### **Recommended Action:**

Pending approval from the Department of Administrative Services, authorize the Executive Director to execute up to a two-month contract extension, not to exceed \$8,000, of the Printing, Storage, and Distribution Services master contract with ColorFX/Mittera Group.

### **Overview:**

Iowa College Aid's current contract with Color FX for Printing, Storage, and Distribution Services will expire January 11, 2021. We are currently receiving proposals for a new contract and expect to make a choice in mid-December. We will present that choice for Board approval at the January meeting. At the recommendation of the Department of Administrative Services, we are requesting an extension of the contract for purposes of product storage and distribution until the new vendor, if it is not ColorFX, is prepared to accept our existing product inventory for storage and distribution. We do not anticipate any printing needs during this time frame.

## Iowa College Student Aid Commission

FUND: '0163

### STRATEGIC RESERVE FUND RECONCILIATION FY 2021 As of October 31, 2020

Beginning Balance As of 07-01-2020 \$27,421,228

#### REVENUES:

Federal Support <sup>1</sup>	1,249,932
Intra-State Transfers <sup>2</sup>	355,169
Conference Registration Fees	-
Interest	24,961
Ascendium Payments <sup>3</sup>	659,550

**TOTAL REVENUES COLLECTED:** \$2,289,613

#### EXPENDITURES:

Salary and Benefits	805,602
Travel	6,122
Office Supplies & Postage	18,953
Printing & Binding	64,945
Advertising & Publicity	11,852
Communications	9,767
Rentals	46,795
Prof & Scientific Services	21,977
Sub Grant Pymts & Outside Services	48,459
Intra-State Transfers	24,693
Office Equipment	-
IT Equipment, Software & Services	162,249
Miscellaneous Expenses	275
State Aid/Transfer to Trust Acct	-
Aid to Individuals (Scholarships)	1,510,842

**TOTAL EXPENDITURES:** (\$2,732,532)

Ending Balance As of October 31, 2020 \$26,978,309

Difference (\$442,919)

Bankers Trust GEAR UP Trust Fund Balance on 10-31- 2020 \$13,347,708

#### Cash Basis Report

<sup>1</sup> GEAR UP and AmeriCorps Grants

<sup>2</sup> Bankers Trust draw down for match portion of GUI 2.0 Scholarship, IOWAccess Citizen Grant, Volunteer Iowa, Partnership Loan Program

<sup>3</sup> Ascendium Payments are received for only 3 months as of October 31.

**Iowa College Student Aid Commission  
Operating Expenditure Summary  
FY 2021 As of October 31, 2020**

<b>Class Name</b>	<b>FY 2021 Budget</b>	<b>FY 2021 YTD Budget</b>	<b>FY 2021 Actual YTD</b>	<b>Actual As % of FY 21 Budget</b>
<b>Revenues</b>				
State Appropriation	591,533	197,178	242,650	41.02%
Federal Grant Receipts:	3,523,893	1,174,631	1,573,568	44.65%
<i>GEAR UP 2.0 Trust Fund Transfer</i>	<i>1,591,735</i>	<i>530,578</i>	-	
<i>GEAR UP 2.0 Scholarship</i>	<i>1</i>	-	<i>1,530,917</i>	
<i>GEAR UP Subgrants</i>	<i>1,146,555</i>	<i>382,185</i>	<i>15,803</i>	
<i>Other<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>785,602</i>	<i>261,867</i>	<i>26,848</i>	
Interest Revenue	337,960	112,653	24,961	7.39%
PLP - Dept of Revenue	75,000	25,000	17,648	23.53%
ETV Grant Total Receipts:	572,002	190,667	367,921	64.32%
<i>Administrative Exp. Reimbursements</i>			<i>20,904</i>	
<i>State Aid to ETV Foster Care</i>			<i>231,968</i>	
<i>Amount Unexpended</i>			<i>115,049</i>	
Receipts from Other State Agencies <sup>2</sup>	220,003	73,334	13,885	6.31%
IOWAccess Citizen Facing Website Grant	14,700	4,900	-	0.00%
Ascendium Payments	3,900,000	1,300,000	659,550	16.91%
Postsecondary Registration Receipts:	447,974	149,325	224,450	50.10%
<i>Administrative Expenses</i>			<i>127,081</i>	
<i>Postsecondary Registration Fund Unexpended Funds</i>			<i>97,369</i>	
<b>Total Revenues:</b>	<b>\$9,683,065</b>	<b>\$3,227,688</b>	<b>\$3,124,634</b>	<b>32.27%</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>				
Salary and Benefits	4,641,984	1,547,328	1,103,016	23.76%
Travel	200,832	66,944	6,322	3.15%
Office Supplies & Postage	81,606	27,202	18,990	23.27%
Printing & Binding	156,800	52,267	64,945	41.42%
Communications (ICN and Cellular)	44,928	14,976	10,028	22.32%
Rentals	160,385	53,462	46,795	29.18%
Prof & Scientific Services <sup>3</sup>	188,902	62,967	21,977	11.63%
Outside Services	113,973	37,991	18,867	16.55%
Outside Services - CE Subgrants	605,000	201,667	15,582	2.58%
Advertising & Publicity	153,002	51,001	11,852	7.75%
Intra-State Reimbursement	275,893	91,964	25,286	9.17%
IT Equip.& Software/Outside Repairs/Service	781,736	260,579	252,863	32.35%
Pass-through Expenditures from Grant Receipts:	3,016,289	1,005,430	1,758,612	58.30%
<i>GEAR UP 2.0 Trust Fund Transfer</i>	<i>1,591,735</i>	<i>530,578</i>	-	
<i>GEAR UP 2.0 Scholarship</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1,510,842</i>	
<i>GEAR UP Subgrants</i>	<i>929,289</i>	<i>309,763</i>	<i>15,802</i>	
<i>State Aid to ETV Foster Care</i>	<i>495,263</i>	<i>165,088</i>	<i>231,968</i>	
<i>ETV Grant Unexpended Amount</i>			<i>115,049</i>	
<i>Postsecondary Registration Fund Unexpended Funds</i>			<i>97,369</i>	
<b>Total Expenditures:</b>	<b>\$10,421,330</b>	<b>\$3,473,778</b>	<b>\$3,355,135</b>	<b>32.19%</b>
<b>Net Income/ Loss</b>	<b>(\$738,265)</b>	<b>(\$246,090)</b>	<b>(\$442,919)</b>	
<b>AmeriCorps Grant and administrative expense reimbursements from GEAR UP<sup>1</sup></b>				
<b>Receipts from Volunteer Iowa and other state agencies<sup>2</sup></b>				
<b>Consultant and professional fees for Community Engagement and GEAR UP &amp; Website update expenses<sup>3</sup></b>				
<b>Operating Expenditure Summary includes State Appropriations, ETV federal funds and Postsecondary Registration Fund.</b>				

**Iowa College Student Aid Commission**  
**Summary of Resources and Expenditures**  
**FY 2021 Program Summary As of October 31, 2020**

	STATE APPROPRIATED PROGRAMS	STATE MANDATED/UNFUNDED PROGRAMS RELATED TO CHAPTER 261 OF IOWA CODE	POSTSECONDARY REGISTRATION	FEDERAL GRANT/PROGRAMS	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	PLP, FFELP (ASCENDIUM)	TOTALS
FY 2021 Number of Programs	13	3	1	4	3	2	26
FY 2021 State Scholarships/Grants/Loan Repayment Programs	79,360,087	-	-	-	-	-	79,360,087
FY 2021 Appropriation for Administration	242,651	-	-	-	-	-	242,651
FY 2021 State Fees, Interest & Reimbursements	-	-	224,450	13,885	-	702,160	940,495
FY 2021 Fed Awards/Grants:							-
Federal CARES ACT Coronavirus Relief Fund C/F Balance	4,893,168						-
Payment to Scholarship Trust	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sub Grants/Admin. Expense Reimbursements	-	-	-	1,573,568	-	-	1,573,568
ETV Federal Grant Reimbursement	-	-	-	367,921	-	-	367,921
<b>Total Revenues:</b>	<b>242,651</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>224,450</b>	<b>1,955,374</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>702,160</b>	<b>3,124,635</b>
Personnel	217,294	50,739	135,671	437,897	255,900	5,515	1,103,016
Travel	1,245	291	778	2,510	1,467	32	6,322
Supplies, Printing & Binding, Postage	16,535	3,861	10,324	33,322	19,473	420	83,935
Support-Rent, Communication, Prof/Outside Service	19,240	4,493	12,013	38,774	22,659	488	97,667
Legal, Audit and State Reimbursements	4,927	1,151	3,076	9,929	5,803	125	25,011
Advertising & Publicity	2,335	545	1,458	4,705	2,750	59	11,852
State Transfers/IT Expenses	49,868	11,644	31,136	100,496	58,728	1,266	253,138
<b>Total Operating Cost</b>	<b>311,445</b>	<b>72,723</b>	<b>194,456</b>	<b>627,634</b>	<b>366,778</b>	<b>7,905</b>	<b>1,580,941</b>
Scholarships/Grants/Loan Repayment Programs	37,143,199	2,000	-	1,510,842	-	-	38,656,041
Aid to individuals (ETV)	-	-	-	231,968	-	-	231,968
Payment to Scholarship Trust (Bankers Trust Fund)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grants to K-12 Schools/Communities (Sub Grants)	-	-	-	15,802	15,582	-	31,384
<b>Total Expenditures (Incl. Scholarship)</b>	<b>37,454,644</b>	<b>74,723</b>	<b>194,456</b>	<b>2,386,246</b>	<b>382,360</b>	<b>7,905</b>	<b>40,500,334</b>
<b>Fund Committed for Scholarship and Aid</b>	<b>47,110,056</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>47,110,056</b>
<b>Unexpended Funds for ETV/Postsecondary</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>97,369</b>	<b>115,049</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>212,418</b>
<i>Net Gain / Loss</i>	<i>(68,795)</i>	<i>(72,723)</i>	<i>(67,375)</i>	<i>(545,920)</i>	<i>(382,360)</i>	<i>694,255</i>	<i>(442,918)</i>
<b>Overall % of Total Expense</b>	<b>92.48%</b>	<b>0.18%</b>	<b>0.48%</b>	<b>5.89%</b>	<b>0.94%</b>	<b>0.02%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

# **IOWA COLLEGE STUDENT AID COMMISSION**

## **Postsecondary Registrations, SARA and Exemptions Reports**

**November 2020**

### **Postsecondary Registration Approvals**

Staff has approved the following noncontroversial registration applications since the last written report to Commissioners in September of 2020.

- Art of Education University (mandatory in-state renewal application)
- Carrington College (out-of-state)
- Chicago School of Professional Psychology (out-of-state mandatory initial application)
- Clarks Summit University (out-of-state mandatory initial application)
- DeVry University (out-of-state)
- Ross College (out-of-state mandatory renewal application)
- San Joaquin Valley College (out-of-state mandatory renewal application)

### **Postsecondary Registration Applications Received and Pending Review**

#### *Standard Initial or Renewal Applications*

- Antioch School of Church Planting and Leadership Development (in-state mandatory renewal application)
- Ashford University (out-of-state mandatory renewal application)
- Bellevue University (out-of-state mandatory renewal application)
- California State University – Northridge (out-of-state mandatory renewal application)
- Carlson College of Massage Therapy (in-state voluntary renewal application)
- Purdue University Global (out-of-state mandatory renewal application)
- Ross University School of Veterinary Medicine (out-of-state mandatory renewal application)
- Saybrook University (out-of-state mandatory initial application)
- University of Southern California (out-of-state mandatory renewal application)
- University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences (out-of-state mandatory renewal application)
- Viterbo University (out-of-state mandatory renewal application)
- WyoTech (out-of-state mandatory initial application)

#### *Change of Ownership/Governance/Control*

- Northcentral University (out-of-state)
- South University (out-of-state)

Postsecondary registration evaluation reports for approved schools are available upon request.

### **Initial Iowa SARA Approvals**

- Emmaus Bible College
- Loras College

### **Initial Iowa SARA Applications Under Review**

None

### **Iowa SARA Renewal Approvals**

- Allen College
- Maharishi International University
- Wartburg Theological Seminary

### **Iowa SARA Renewal Applications Under Review**

- Art of Education University
- Briar Cliff University
- Cornell College
- Des Moines University
- University of Northern Iowa

### **Iowa Exempt School Approvals**

- Allen College
- Maharishi International University
- Wartburg Theological Seminary
- Zeal Salon Spa & Academy

### **Iowa Exempt School Applications under Review**

- Bio-Chi Institute of Massage Therapy
- Dancing Prairie Massage Therapy
- Faust Institute
- Grinnell College
- Inste Global Bible College
- Iowa Training Academy
- Iowa Wesleyan University

- Luther College
- New Horizon Computer Learning – Hiawatha
- POCA Technical Institute
- Salon Professional Academy, The
- Siouxland Pipe Welding
- UnityPoint Health – Des Moines School of Radiologic Technology
- University of Iowa
- University of Northern Iowa
- World of Beauty



# ANNUAL REPORT **FY20**



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# FROM THE DIRECTOR

To say this year was a challenge would be an understatement.

When I took the reins of Iowa College Aid in January, the agency was marking happy milestones: We had just launched a texting program, the new Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship was a huge success, FAFSA filing rates and Course to College participation were well ahead of last year, and our GEAR UP Iowa students were about to graduate from high school. And then ...

Suddenly I was not only getting my bearings in a new job, but also managing a staff that had shifted to teleworking nearly overnight—and we were trying to maintain connections with schools and students who had moved just as quickly to all-virtual learning environments. These changes played out against a backdrop of anxiety about our collective health and safety.

To say that staff rose to these challenges would be another understatement.

Even as they set up home offices in spare rooms, bedrooms, kitchens, and basements, Iowa College Aid employees were already establishing new avenues to support Iowa schools, students, and families. They gave themselves crash courses in webinar and telemeeting platforms. They monitored constantly changing situations and distributed clear, current information. They reached out to check on each other.

This report is a snapshot of a truly unique period for our agency. It is also a reflection of the creativity, flexibility, and dedication of the people who work here.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Wiederspan". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

Mark Wiederspan  
Executive Director  
Iowa College Aid

# IOWA COLLEGE AID

**Our motto**, “Because College Changes Everything,” is borne out in the many and varied benefits of higher education. As individuals, college graduates earn higher wages, are more likely to hold jobs, and report greater satisfaction with their lives. As workers, they make their communities economically stronger and more competitive. As taxpayers, they contribute more while relying less on social services. As members of their communities, they are more likely to be active by donating, voting, and volunteering. As parents, they raise children who are more likely to go to college, extending the advantages through generations.

Just as the benefits of higher education spread across many areas, increasing college access and success requires a multitude of interconnected efforts. Iowa College Aid supports students and families through every step of the college-going process with services and aid that reach students directly, along with initiatives based in schools and communities.

Local College Access Networks and GEAR UP Iowa help to build early awareness of college and career possibilities, starting in the middle and even elementary school years. Activities like academic coaching, soft skills building, and campus and workplace visits encourage young students to begin planning for their paths beyond high school.

In the high school years, Course to College and the Iowa College and Career Readiness Academy provide tools and resources for school counselors and other college access professionals as they create a college-going culture in their schools and communities. LCANs work with leaders from the business, education, and nonprofit sectors to identify and address barriers to higher education. At the student level, AmeriCorps College Access Coaches offer direct peer-to-peer assistance. Websites, social media, and free publications guide students and families through the complex process of applying for college and financial aid.

**Our work is not finished** when students enroll in college. Financial, academic, and social support continue to be key to their success. Grant and scholarship programs for Iowa undergraduates increase their chances of graduating and reduce the amount of debt they incur. AmeriCorps College Success Coaches, Virtual College Coach, and GEAR UP Iowa all help students make the transition to college. Even after college, loan repayment programs help graduates pay off their student loan debt.

Support for college students also takes the form of consumer protection. Iowa College Aid is the state agency that evaluates and authorizes higher education institutions to operate in Iowa or to offer distance education to Iowans. In that role, we also handle student questions, concerns, and complaints.

Along with all these student-directed services, Iowa College Aid has a research team that produces trusted, reliable data about higher education in Iowa. This information might be as broad as a statewide report or as targeted as a dashboard for a single legislative district. Sound research helps us analyze our own programs and helps stakeholders make informed, data-driven decisions that benefit Iowans.

**These intertwined efforts** are difficult to capture in a brief description, but we hope this report will help you understand both their individual functions and their interconnections. Together, they all work toward fulfilling our mission and vision, always with “Because College Changes Everything” foremost in our minds.

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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## OUR MISSION

We advocate for and support Iowans as they explore, finance, and complete educational opportunities beyond high school to increase family and community success.

## OUR MOTTO

Because college changes everything.

## OUR VISION

All Iowans can achieve an education beyond high school.

## AGENCY STRATEGIC GOALS

1. Be a trusted source of information for Iowa residents and higher education stakeholders on postsecondary education access, affordability, success, and completion.
2. Align programs and services with the postsecondary needs of Iowa residents and key stakeholders.
3. Increase and align resources to support agency programs and services.

# AGENCY HISTORY

- 1963** Higher Education Facilities Commission created to administer federal grants for construction of academic facilities
- 1960s** Becomes state-designated guarantor for the Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP); begins administering state grants, scholarships and loan forgiveness
- 1969** Iowa Tuition Grant begins
- 1973** Iowa Vocational-Technical Tuition Grant begins
- 1978** Renamed Iowa College Aid Commission
- 1996** Iowa National Guard Educational Assistance Grant (NGEAP) begins
- 2007** All Iowa Opportunity Scholarship begins
- 2008** First GEAR UP Iowa grant begins
- 2009** I Have a Plan Iowa (IHAPI) begins
- 2010** FFELP eliminated; sponsors Iowa Financial Literacy Program (IFLP)
- 2012** FFELP portfolio transferred to Ascendium Education Group, then known as Great Lakes Higher Education Corporation; Kibbie Grant (Iowa Skilled Workforce Shortage Tuition Grant) begins
- 2013** Course to College (then known as 3-Step Process) begins
- 2014** First Local College Access Network (LCAN) begins; second GEAR UP Iowa grant begins
- 2015** IFLP transferred to Iowa Insurance Division
- 2016** Iowa Go Alliance Academy begins
- 2017** Course to College Corps (the precursor to College Access and College Success AmeriCorps) begins
- 2018** Iowa College & Career Readiness Academy replaces Iowa Go Alliance Academy
- 2019** Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship and Future Ready Iowa Grant begin
- 2020** Virtual College Coach begins

# BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

## **Dr. Michael Ash**



President, Southeastern  
Community College  
  
Represents community  
colleges\*

## **Ms. Melissa Hidalgo**



Represents Iowa college  
students\*

## **Mr. Doug Shull, Vice Chair**



Represents general  
public\*

## **Mr. Manny Atwood**



School Counselor,  
Central Decatur School  
  
Represents K-12  
practitioners\*

## **Sen. Tim Kraayenbrink**



Represents Iowa  
Senate\*\*

## **Ms. Barbara Sloniker**



Represents parents of  
Iowa students\*

## **Ms. Sherry Bates**



Regent, State Board  
of Regents  
  
Represents State Board  
of Regents

## **Dr. Kathleen Mulholland, Chair**



Represents general  
public\*

## **Ms. Emily Stork**



Represents general  
public\*

## **Rep. Cecil Dolecheck**



Represents Iowa  
House\*\*

## **Dr. Mark Putnam**



President, Central  
College  
  
Represents private  
colleges and universities\*

## **Mr. Jeremy Varner**



Division Administrator,  
Community Colleges  
  
Represents Iowa  
Department of  
Education

## **Mr. Timothy Fitzgibbon**



Represents general  
public\*

## **Sen. Herman Quirnbach**



Represents Iowa  
Senate\*\*

## **Rep. Cindy Winckler**

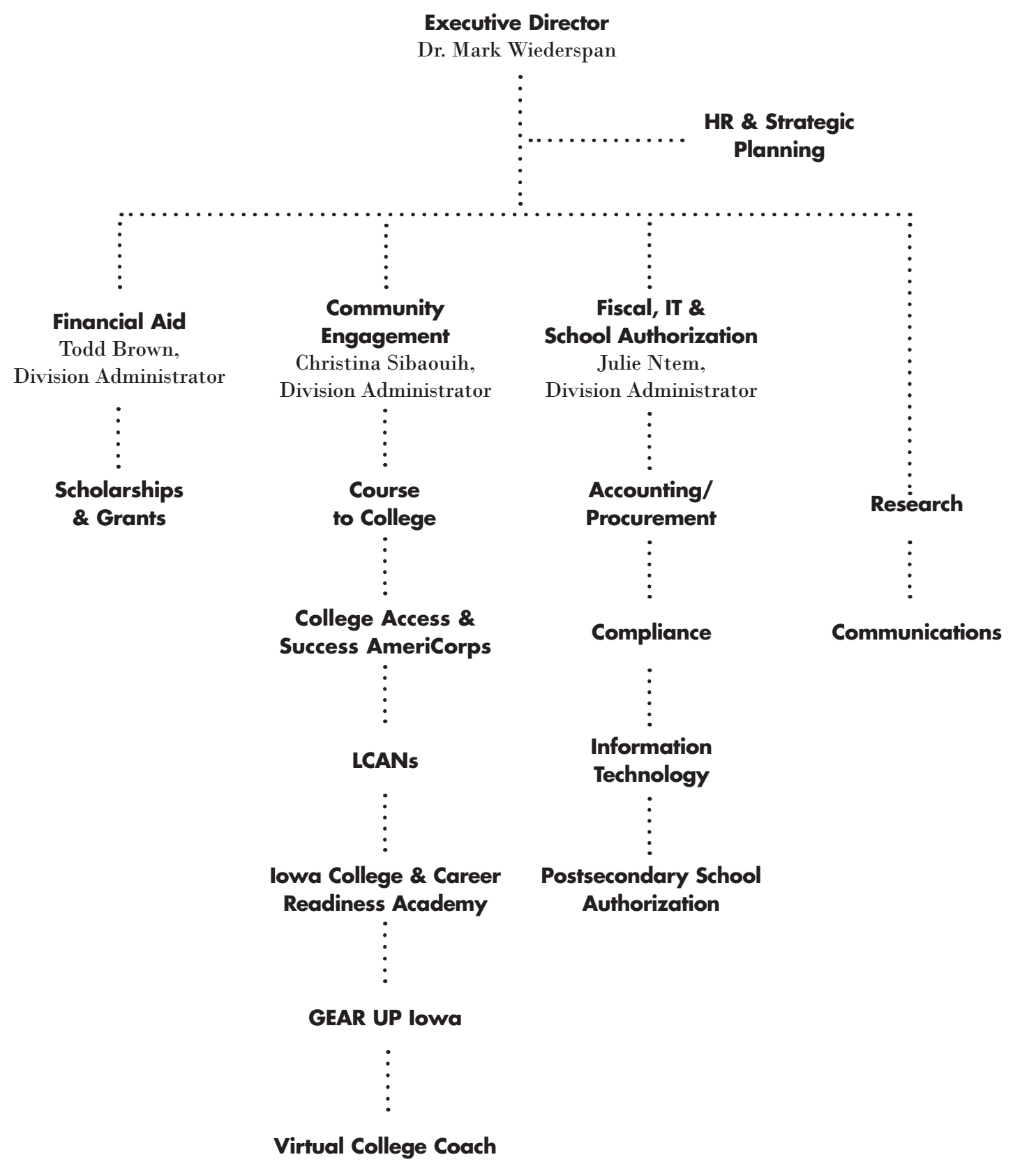


Represents Iowa  
House\*\*

\*Appointed by the Governor

\*\*Ex officio (nonvoting)

# DIVISIONS & TEAMS



## JULY 2019

- GEAR UP staff and coaches attend the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships/GEAR UP annual conference in San Francisco.
- Four GEAR UP Iowa students attend the Youth Leadership Summit in San Francisco.
- Iowa College Aid releases a report on FAFSA filing trends in Iowa.
- Community Engagement consultant Rohey Sallah presents at the National College Attainment Network's first #FormYourFuture FAFSA Completion Institute in Dallas.
- A Facebook campaign promotes the Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship, and visits to the program's web page triple in two weeks.
- Grants are awarded to the Story County CAN and the OPT-in CAN for System Involved Youth, bringing the total of Local College Access Networks in Iowa to 13.

## AUGUST 2019

- Iowa College Aid's booth at the Iowa State Fair (*right*) invites visitors to take an informal poll about how college will change them.
- Staff meet with representatives of community colleges, the Governor's office, and other state agencies to discuss adjustments to the Last-Dollar Scholarship.
- ACT highlights the success of GEAR UP Iowa's districtwide ACT testing on its GEAR UP Toolkit web page.
- Division Administrator Todd Brown is chosen president-elect of the National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs.
- GEAR UP Iowa's BIG Dream Gathering draws 199 Des Moines students and family members and 35 exhibitors.
- Course to College launches for 2019-20, with the new component of mini grants for Partner sites.
- GEAR UP Iowa conducts a professional development seminar at the Blank Park Zoo for coaches, staff, and students.
- The AmeriCorps program expands to add Student Leaders who will serve as peer mentors to high school classmates.
- LCAN staff, coordinators, and team members attend the Maritime Training Academy in Michigan.
- Community Engagement Consultant Jamie Covell is appointed to the National College Attainment Network Advisory Task Force.
- Jamie Covell's job transitions to 100 percent Course to College, with Community Engagement Consultant Megan Sibbel taking over the Dubuque LCAN.



## SEPTEMBER 2019

- Iowa's Area Education Agencies approve a new course in the Iowa College & Career Readiness Academy curriculum on equity for traditionally underrepresented students.
- Division Administrator Todd Brown presents to the Legislative Fiscal Committee Meeting on the Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship.
- The LCAN team launches a monthly newsletter.
- Executive Director Karen Misjak announces that she will retire in January.
- Community Engagement staff attend a two-day National Postsecondary Strategy Institute workshop at Des Moines Area Community College. Iowa College Aid is a sponsor.
- Liz Yaddof joins the Community Engagement team to lead the new Virtual College Coach texting campaign.
- Iowa College Aid joins the Attorney General's Office in cautioning students about income-sharing agreements.
- Nearly 200 GEAR UP Iowa students attend Experience Iowa State Day.
- The Commission Board approves statutory changes to address eligibility gaps in the Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship.

## OCTOBER 2019

- The FAFSA and Iowa Financial Aid Application open October 1. In the first two days, 660 Iowans submit the IFAA, compared to 370 at the same point last year.
- LCAN coordinators attend annual orientation at the Iowa College Aid office.
- The Research in Higher Education journal publishes an article co-authored by Division Administrator Mark Wiederspan. The article examines an income-contingent student loan program in South Korea.
- AmeriCorps completes recruitment for the year with nine College Access Coaches and 28 Student Leaders at 30 high schools.
- Community Engagement Consultant Jamie Covell writes a blog for ACT about the College Application Campaign.
- Members of the Leadership Team and the Action Team of the Sioux City College Access Network are honored at the Northwest Iowa Area Education Agency appreciation lunch.
- The Iowa Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators honors Postsecondary Registration Administrator Carolyn Small (*right*) with the John Heisner Memorial Lifetime Achievement Award at its annual fall conference in Dubuque.



## NOVEMBER 2019

- Governor Kim Reynolds holds a news conference at Iowa College Aid, where she announces preliminary fall numbers for the Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship. The Governor also meets with staff (*right*) and thanks them for their hard work to implement Future Ready Iowa programs.
- More than 150 people attend Iowa College Aid's "Assessing the Future" conference at Des Moines Area Community College's Ankeny campus.
- Representatives of the Iowa Army National Guard visit Iowa College Aid to present certificates of appreciation to staff.



## DECEMBER 2019

- The first automated FAFSA report of the year goes out to public high schools.
- Iowa College Aid announces the selection of Dr. Mark Wiederspan as Executive Director.
- Iowa cracks the top 10 states for FAFSA filing rates.
- GEAR UP Iowa awards Year 7 College Partner Grants to nine colleges and universities in Iowa.

## JANUARY 2020

- The first messages go out through the Virtual College Coach texting program.
- Meghan Oster joins Iowa College Aid as a Statistical Research Analyst.
- Iowa College Aid distributes district dashboards to legislators, detailing high school graduation rate, FAFSA filing rate, average ACT score, college-going rate, educational level, median income, and participation in Iowa College Aid programs.
- The rate of Iowa public high schools opting in to automated FAFSA reports reaches 100 percent.
- Julie Ntem, Division Administrator for IT, Fiscal, and State Authorization, is elected president of the Iowa Jump\$tart Coalition for Personal Financial Literacy.
- Governor Kim Reynolds touts the early success of the Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship in her Condition of the State address.



- A reception at the Capitol honors retiring Executive Director Karen Misjak (*above, with past and current staff*).
- Jayne Smith joins the Postsecondary School Authorization team as a Compliance Officer.
- Community Engagement Consultants Elizabeth Yaddof and Keyli Keifer write a guest blog for ACT.
- Iowa College Aid receives a \$15,000 grant from State Higher Education Executive Officers to automate and streamline postsecondary school authorization.
- Community Engagement Consultant Jamie Covell is appointed to the Iowa ACT State Organization Board.

## FEBRUARY 2020

- GEAR UP Iowa staff and coaches attend the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships Capacity-Building Workshop in Orlando. GEAR UP Coordinator Karmon Long presents about how to include college and career readiness in the eighth-to-ninth-grade transition.
- Merima Dizdarevic is promoted to Executive Officer.
- Division Administrator Todd Brown presents to a joint Legislative subcommittee on Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations on health care loan repayment and forgiveness programs.
- Governor Kim Reynolds appoints Melissa Hidalgo to represent Iowa college students on the Iowa College Aid Board of Commissioners.

- Executive Director Mark Wiederspan and Commissioners Jeremy Varner and Cindy Winckler attend the Education Commission of the States’ “Connecting Education to Work” conference in North Carolina. Iowa is one of four states selected to participate and view Gallup survey data on public perception of higher education.
- Commissioner Melissa Hidalgo and Public Information Officer Elizabeth Keest Sedrel are panelists on U.S. Representative Cindy Axne’s student loan debt roundtable at Grand View University.
- Executive Director Mark Wiederspan and Commissioner Mark Putnam present to the Iowa House Appropriations Committee on trends in higher education enrollment.
- The Iowa School Counselor Association approves an ad hoc position for Iowa College Aid on its governing board. Jamie Covell, Community Engagement Consultant with Course to College, will serve a three-year term.
- University of Northern Iowa visits seven GEAR UP Iowa high schools in February and March.
- InSpirit Institute Inc., a massage school in Dubuque, closes abruptly. The State Authorization team travels to Dubuque to collect student records.

## MARCH 2020

- In a customer service survey of financial aid directors, Iowa College Aid receives an average rating of 4.68 out of 5, up from 4.33 in the previous survey in 2017.
- More than 80 GEAR UP Iowa seniors from Des Moines North, Hoover, East, and Lincoln high schools visit Des Moines Area Community College.
- College Decision Day registration opens.
- Gov. Kim Reynolds proclaims March as Latino Postsecondary Attainment Month in Iowa.
- Iowa’s K-12 schools close in response to COVID-19.
- Iowa College Aid closes its office.
- LCANs pause their grant application cycle.
- GEAR UP Iowa launches a virtual assistance platform in English and Spanish.
- Staff release a first round of guidance on program eligibility for students whose studies are affected by COVID-19.
- Iowa receives a \$3.5 million grant from the Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems Grant Program to help close equity and opportunity gaps in the state.
- The state FAFSA tracker (FAFSA.iowa.gov) expands to include completion rates for LCANs.
- In the early weeks of a national shift to teleworking, Tennessee, Minnesota, and Mississippi contact Iowa College Aid to learn about best practices for college access and success programs.
- Iowa College & Career Readiness Academy opens a special session for educators who need to complete work while schools are closed.
- Community Engagement Consultants Megan Sibbel and Jamie Covell present at the Iowa ACT Conference in Cedar Rapids on the Iowa College and Career Readiness Academy and Course to College. Community Engagement Consultant Liz Yaddof presents on the Virtual College Coach texting campaign.

## APRIL 2020

- Legislative leaders suspend the 2020 session.
- The Iowa Department of Education agrees to provide \$28,000 to expand the Iowa College & Career Readiness Academy.
- Iowa College Aid live streams a virtual FAFSA Day (*right*) in partnership with the Iowa Association of Independent Colleges and Universities and the Iowa College Access Network. It draws more than 800 viewers in real time and more than 2,000 viewers overall.



- LCAN staff hold a virtual meeting with coordinators to discuss collective impact work during the pandemic.
- Program Planner Keyli Keifer presents on the College Success Coach program at the Iowa Association of Community College Trustees' monthly meeting of college presidents.
- Staff release a second and third round of guidance on program eligibility for students whose studies are affected by COVID-19.
- LCANs are allowed to repurpose funds to provide essentials for at-home learning.
- Iowa College Aid contacts 79 higher education institutions to explain the process for accessing the CARES Act Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund.
- Gov. Kim Reynolds proclaims May as College Decision month and creates a congratulatory video for virtual College Decision Day celebrations.
- Course to College Registration opens for 2020-21.
- Staff work with the Iowa Department of Education to streamline the process of verifying employment for applicants of the Teach Iowa Scholar and Teacher Shortage Loan Forgiveness programs.
- GEAR UP Iowa offers schools the opportunity to request a "no-cost" three-month extension of their project performance period.

## MAY 2020

- Virtual College Decision Day events take place around the state.
- We release the “Condition of Higher Education in Iowa 2020” report.
- Staff cover 2,100 miles to deliver 12,000 color-changing cups to 46 schools.
- Education and Training Voucher coordinator Tristan Lynn meets with coordinators of similar programs across the country to discuss ways to assist former foster youth during the pandemic.
- GEAR UP Iowa hosts a virtual “Passing the Baton” conference to prepare for the closeout of Year 6 for the 2.0 cohort.
- The Virtual College Coach texting campaign surpasses 1,000 opt-ins.
- Community Engagement Consultants Anne Thomas and Megan Sibbel present at the virtual Collective Impact Convening, along with Nate Monson of Iowa Safe Schools/QSAT and Cecilia Martinez of Latinos CAN.
- Iowa College Aid releases a working paper analyzing educational and employment outcomes for recipients of the federal Education and Training Voucher for former foster youth.
- The Course to College AmeriCorps–College Access grant for 2020-21 is approved.
- Eastern Iowa Community Colleges, Des Moines Area Community College, Indian Hills Community College, and the University of Iowa hire GEAR UP Iowa Year 7 coordinators.
- The Postsecondary Authorization team begins accepting registration renewal fees electronically.
- An electronic residency form is released for colleges to use to determine residency for state scholarship/grant eligibility.

## JUNE 2020

- The Legislature reconvenes.
- Executive Director Mark Wiederspan writes an op-ed acknowledging the GEAR UP Iowa class of 2020. It runs in the Iowa Capital Dispatch, the Marshalltown Times-Republican, and The Storm Lake Times.
- Final loan repayment awards are issued under the Teacher Shortage Loan Forgiveness Program.
- The Capitalize on ICAPS information series, for financial aid administrators, begins.
- The Iowa State Fair Board votes to cancel the 2020 fair.
- The Iowa College & Career Readiness Academy launches its summer session with 55 participants.
- All 12 LCANs submit new grant applications.
- Gov. Kim Reynolds signs legislation creating the Rural Veterinarian Loan Repayment Program, expanding eligibility for the Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship, and allowing recipients of some repayment programs to refinance with private lenders and maintain eligibility.
- The first loan repayment awards (Health Care Loan Repayment Program) are generated and processed through ICAPS®.
- Iowa College Aid begins accepting payment certification from colleges and universities online.
- GEAR UP Iowa subgrants to partner high schools officially end (with the exception of a handful of no-cost extensions). GEAR UP Iowa College Partner Grants officially begin.

# FINANCIAL AID

\$80M

State  
appropriations

8

Scholarship and  
grant programs

4

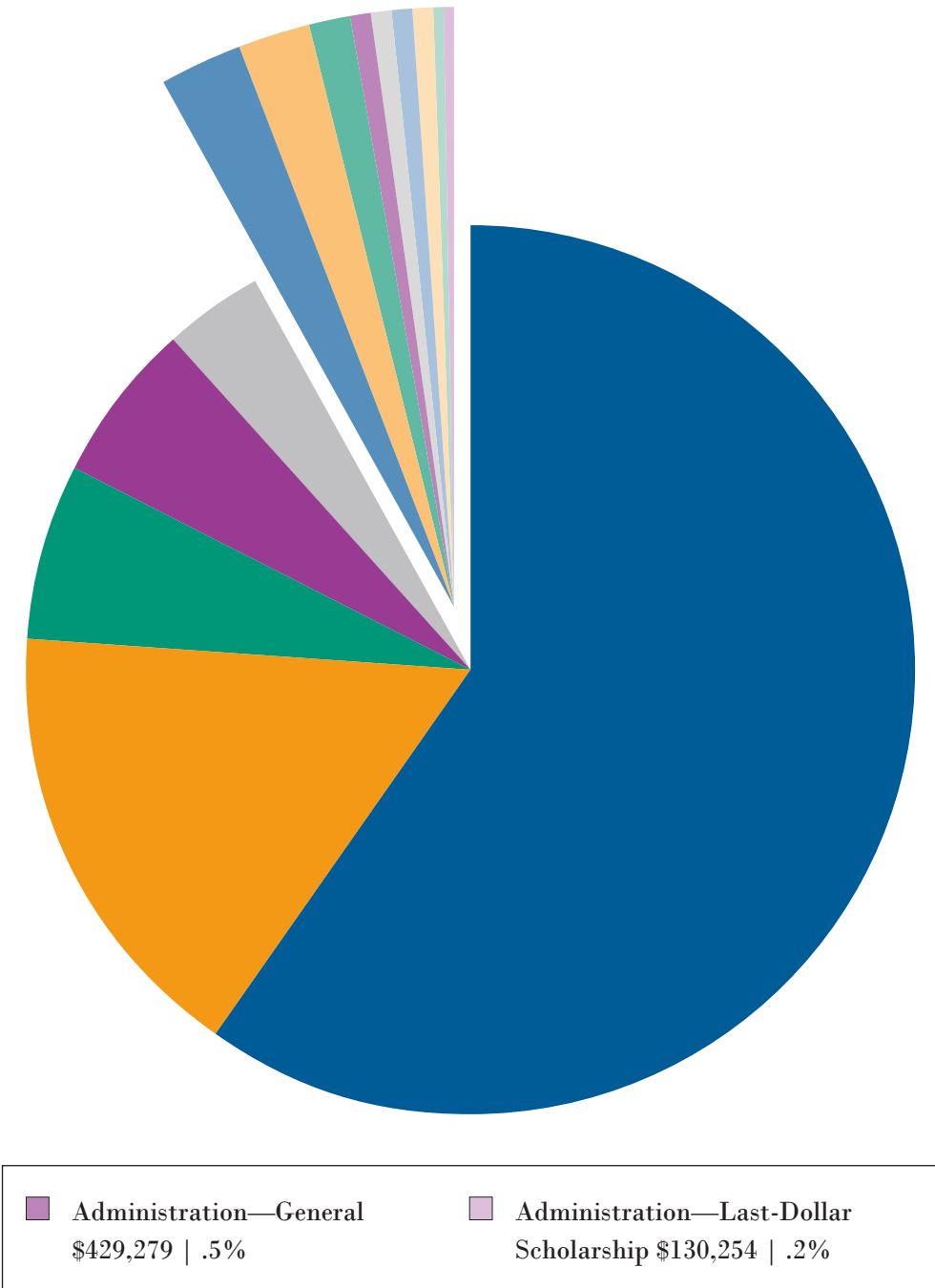
Loan forgiveness  
programs

25K+

Awards made  
in FY20

FY 2020 state appropriations: \$79,619,620

- Iowa Tuition Grant Not-for-Profit  
\$47,703,463 | 59.9%
- Future Ready Iowa  
Last-Dollar Scholarship  
\$13,004,744 | 16.3%
- Skilled Workforce Shortage  
Tuition Grant (Kibbie Grant)  
\$5,000,000 | 6.3%
- Iowa National Guard  
Service Scholarship  
\$4,700,000 | 5.9%
- All Iowa Opportunity Scholarship  
\$3,000,000 | 3.8%
- Iowa Vocational-Technical  
Tuition Grant  
\$1,750,185 | 2.2%
- Rural Iowa Primary Care  
Loan Repayment  
\$1,424,502 | 1.8%
- Future Ready Iowa Grant  
\$1,000,000 | 1.3%
- Iowa Tuition Grant For-Profit  
\$426,220 | .5%
- Health Professional Recruitment  
\$400,973 | .5%
- Teach Iowa Scholar  
\$400,000 | .5%
- Health Care Loan Repayment  
\$250,000 | .3%



## Scholarship & Grant Reserve Fund balance

Beginning balance for FY20: \$487,573.56

Ending balance: \$397,999.56

Iowa College Aid administers the Scholarship and Grant Reserve Fund authorized in Iowa Code Section 261.20 “to alleviate a current fiscal year shortfall in appropriations for scholarship or tuition grant programs that have the same nature as the programs for which the monies were originally appropriated.” The maximum balance is 1 percent of the funds appropriated to the Iowa Tuition Grant and Iowa Vocational-Technical Tuition Grant programs.

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**“Thank you so much for choosing me all these years. This has **truly been life-changing!**”**

—Jessica Graupmann, All Iowa Opportunity Scholarship



## State-funded scholarships and grants

**All Iowa Opportunity Scholarship:**

Need-based assistance for students at risk of not pursuing higher education because of social and financial barriers.

**Future Ready Iowa Grant:**

For Iowa residents returning to school for a bachelor’s degree in a high-demand program of study.

**Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship:**

For Iowa residents working toward a certificate, diploma, or associate’s degree in a high-demand program of study.

**Iowa National Guard Service Scholarship:**

For members of Iowa Air and Army National Guard units in undergraduate programs at Iowa colleges and universities.

**Iowa Tuition Grant For-Profit:**

Need-based assistance for Iowa residents in undergraduate programs at Iowa’s for-profit private colleges and universities.

**Iowa Tuition Grant Not-for-Profit:**

Need-based assistance for Iowa residents in undergraduate programs at Iowa’s not-for-profit private colleges and universities.

**Iowa Vocational-Technical Tuition Grant:**

Need-based assistance for Iowa residents in career or technical programs of study at Iowa community colleges.

**Skilled Workforce Shortage Tuition (Kibbie) Grant:**

Need-based assistance for Iowa residents in high-demand career or technical programs of study at Iowa community colleges.

## State-funded loan forgiveness programs

### Health Care Loan Repayment:

For nurse educators teaching full-time at eligible Iowa colleges and universities, as well as registered nurses, advanced registered nurse practitioners, and physician assistants who practice in high-need communities.

### Health Professional Recruitment:

For Des Moines University graduates who practice in high-need communities.

### Rural Iowa Primary Care Loan Repayment:

For graduates of Des Moines University or the University of Iowa who practice in specified rural Iowa communities.

### Teach Iowa Scholar:

For highly qualified Iowa teachers who teach in designated shortage areas.

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## Other aid programs administered by Iowa College Aid

### Education & Training Voucher:

Federal program for students who are or were in foster care or who were adopted from foster care.

### Karen Misjak GEAR UP Iowa Scholarship:

For students in GEAR UP Iowa (early graduates from the class of 2020 at partner schools).

### Governor Terry E. Branstad Iowa State Fair Scholarship:

For outstanding Iowa high school seniors who have strong academic and leadership credentials and have actively participated in the Iowa State Fair.

.....



“Without this scholarship, I would not be in the position to be **pursuing my dream** of becoming a registered nurse, as it has been my dream since I was a young child. I am very grateful for your support.”

—Shalee J. Fuller, Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship



### Governor’s news conference

Governor Kim Reynolds visited our office November 19, 2019, to announce Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship numbers and to thank staff for their efforts in ramping up Future Ready Iowa programs.

<b>Program</b>	<b>Initial appropriation</b>	<b>Total applicants</b>	<b>Unduplicated recipients</b>	<b>Total awards</b>	<b>Average award</b>	<b>Max award for FY20</b>
Iowa Tuition Grant Not-for-Profit	\$47,703,463	23,353	9,558	\$47,358,049	\$4,955	\$6,000
Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship	\$13,004,744	21,665	6,547	\$14,279,173	\$2,181	\$10,908
Skilled Workforce Shortage Tuition Grant	\$5,000,000	18,899	4,401	\$4,873,288	\$1,107	\$2,825
Iowa National Guard Service Scholarship	\$4,700,000	1,320	895	\$4,723,179	\$5,277	\$8,073
All Iowa Opportunity Scholarship	\$3,000,000	5,237	788	\$3,253,619	\$4,129	\$4,644
Iowa Vocational-Technical Tuition Grant	\$1,750,185	18,899	2,672	\$1,759,272	\$658	\$900
Rural Iowa Primary Care Loan Repayment	\$1,424,502	9	9	\$1,798,425	\$199,825	\$200,000
Future Ready Iowa Grant	\$1,000,000	479	37	\$95,858	\$2,591	\$3,500
Iowa Tuition Grant For-Profit	\$426,220	1,329	359	\$377,443	\$1,051	\$2,500
Health Professional Recruitment	\$400,973	16	14	\$570,000	\$40,714	\$50,000
Teach Iowa Scholar	\$400,000	146	102	\$408,000	\$4,000	\$4,000
Health Care Loan Repayment	\$250,000	110	31	\$136,387	\$4,400	\$6,000
Iowa Teacher Shortage Loan Forgiveness*	\$0	31	30	\$80,794	\$2,693	\$7,927
Karen Misjak GEAR UP Iowa Scholarship	N/A	267	85	\$58,824	\$692	\$1,200
Education & Training Voucher	\$581,217	422	159	\$581,217	\$3,655	\$5,000
Governor Terry E. Branstad Iowa State Fair Scholarship	N/A	98	4	\$14,000	\$3,500	\$5,000

\*Discontinued in 2017; final cohort received funding in FY20.

# COURSE TO COLLEGE

152

High schools participated

52

High schools opted to be Partner sites

8K+

College applications submitted

342

Public high schools received FAFSA reports

## Prepare, Apply, Finance, Decide, Go

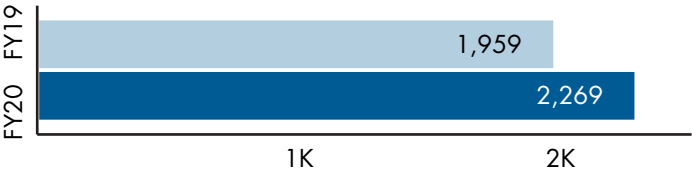
This program supports high schools in creating a college-going culture through five steps: Prepare, Apply, Finance, Decide, and Go. Schools choose from two levels of involvement: Participant and Partner. Partner sites commit to host events and to distribute student and coordinator surveys. This was the second year that we offered automated FAFSA completion reports—and the second year that all Iowa public high schools signed up to receive them. We continue to be the only state to provide this data to all public high schools. While the abrupt closure of schools in the spring due to COVID-19 made it difficult to track College Decision Day events, many of which were held virtually, we saw dramatic growth this year in other participation metrics (*right*).



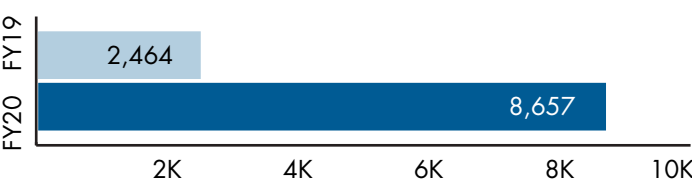
“Every year when we celebrate **College Decision Day** events, we talk about how important our new high school graduates are to Iowa’s future, and that has never been more true.”

—Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds, addressing Iowa’s high school class of 2020 in a video for College Decision Day

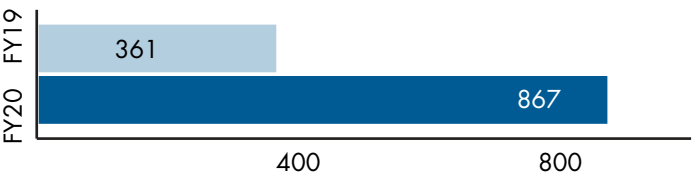
## HS seniors in college application events



## College applications submitted



## HS seniors completing year-end survey



## Operation cup giveaway

In May, Community Engagement staff loaded up our fleet of vehicles and covered 2,100 miles to deliver 12,000 color-changing “College Changes Everything” cups to 46 schools in 33 communities.

# COLLEGE ACCESS & SUCCESS AMERICORPS

26

College Access  
host sites

3

College Success  
host sites

10K+

Member  
hours

740

Students  
reached

## Removing barriers to college

AmeriCorps members, placed by Iowa College Aid in high schools and community colleges, work to remove barriers to college access, success, and completion. They provide customized direct support to students, as well as capacity development for schools and colleges.

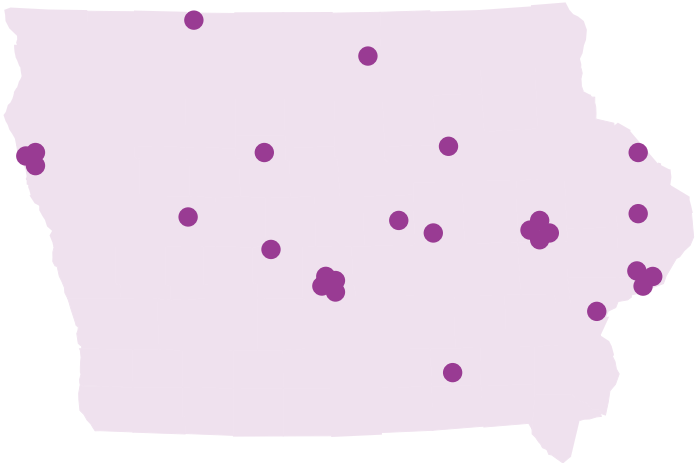
College Access Coaches follow Iowa College Aid’s Course to College program to help high schools create a college-going culture by:

- Preparing students for college.
- Helping students apply to college.
- Ensuring students complete a FAFSA and research all finance options.
- Celebrating students’ decisions about postsecondary education.

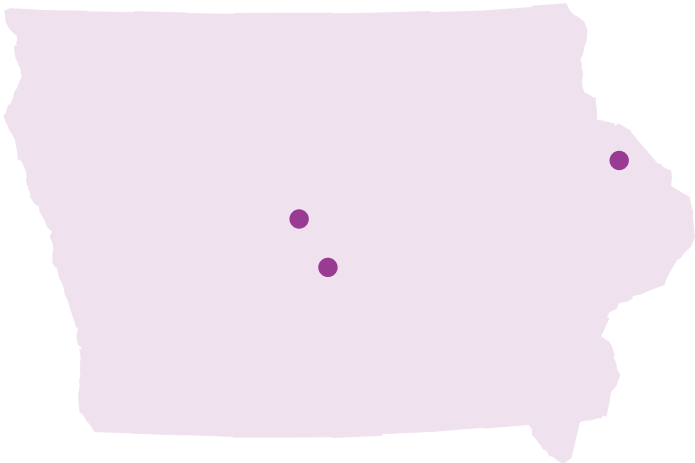
College Success Coaches support college students by:

- Promoting the Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship and Future Ready Iowa Grant throughout Iowa and ensuring award recipients remain eligible.
- Assisting incoming students with the transition from high school graduation to their college campus.
- Providing individualized holistic college success services to current college students

## College Access



## College Success



“One of the most rewarding things in my position was being able to **connect with students** on a completely personal level. I took time to really listen about obstacles each student was facing.”

—Morgan Wollesen, College Access Coach in Carroll Region, 2019-20



# LOCAL COLLEGE ACCESS NETWORKS

17

Applications received

13

Communities funded

\$600K+

Awarded in grants

## Collective Impact to raise attainment

Local College Access Networks (LCANs) work in communities to raise college attainment. Iowa College Aid provides funding, training, and technical assistance to align the efforts of the education, government, business, and nonprofit sectors—a model known as Collective Impact. The total awarded in FY20 was \$604,653. Of the 13 LCANs funded, 10 are centered on a geographic area, while three are specific to a statewide student demographic.

## LCAN goals (Number with that goal in parentheses)

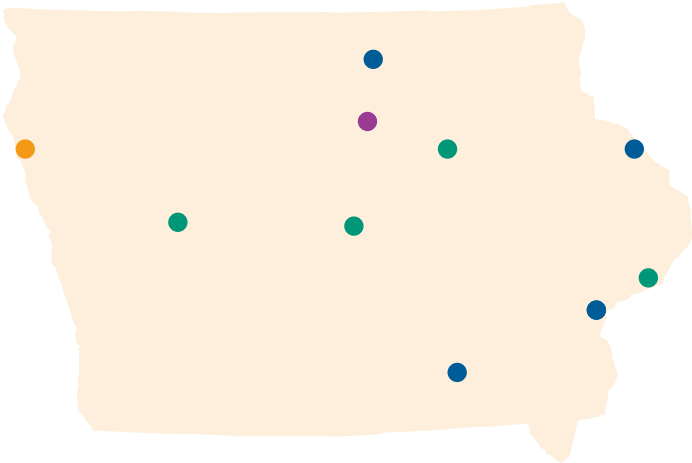
- FAFSA completion (5)
- College enrollment (5)
- Reduce gaps (4)
- Adult learners (3)
- College/career readiness (3)
- College-going culture (3)
- HS completion (2)
- College completion (2)
- College intentions (2)
- Increased engagement (2)
- Advocacy tools (1)
- Career pathways (1)



“Our partners collaborate to **reduce barriers** to postsecondary success such as affordability, access, persistence, and attainment.”

—Donna Loewen, Ph.D.,  
Dubuque College Access  
Network Coordinator

## LCAN communities



### YEAR I

- Black Hawk County CAN
- Carroll Area CAN
- Latinos CAN\*
- OPT-in CAN for System Involved Youth\*
- Quad Cities CAN
- Queer Supports Advisory Team (QSAT)\*
- Story County CAN

### YEAR II

- Aligned Impact Muscatine (AIM)
- Dubuque CAN
- Mason City CAN
- Ottumwa Cradle-College-Career (C3)

### YEAR III

- Mission Possible: Franklin County

### IMPLEMENTATION

- Sioux City CAN (previous model grant completed midway through fiscal year)

\*Statewide

# IOWA COLLEGE & CAREER READINESS ACADEMY

189

Enrolled  
in courses

10

Professional  
certificates awarded

7

Specialist certificates  
awarded

13

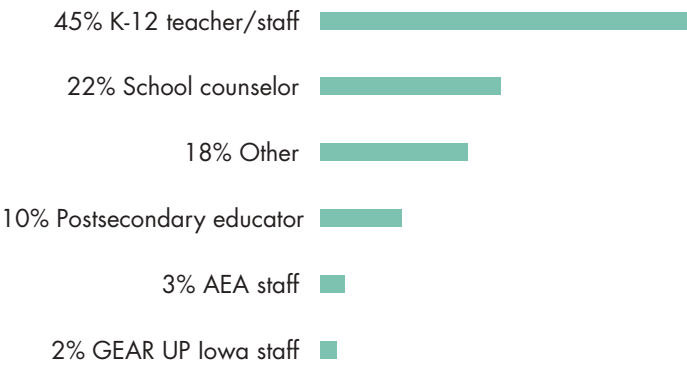
Badges  
awarded

## Continuing ed for college access professionals

This suite of six Iowa-specific online courses helps college access and success professionals provide equitable postsecondary opportunities for all students. Participants who complete the first three courses are certified as College Access Professionals; those who complete five courses are certified as College Access Specialists. In FY20, we added an advanced course in equity issues; participants who complete that course in addition to the first five earn an Equity badge. In FY20, 189 people from 86 school districts, community colleges, colleges/universities, and Iowa AEAs enrolled in these courses.



## Participants' job categories



## Course facilitators

- Sue Schirmer, Heartland AEA Professional Learning and Leadership Consultant
- David Ford, Mississippi Bend AEA Focus Area Consultant
- Gena Gesing, Northeast Iowa Community College Director of Career Services
- Meredith Dohmen, Bright Foundation Director of Scholarships
- Mark Shea, Prairie Lakes AEA Postsecondary Success Lead

“The Academy increased my understanding of resources and programs available to **help our kids be more successful** in their planning and futures. I had the opportunity to learn important content and network with many professionals in my field.”

—Julie Chapuis, school counselor, Van Buren County School District,  
College Access Specialist



6K+

Students in cohort  
in FY20

25

High school  
partners

12

Low-income  
school districts

4K+

Students received some  
form of service

Cohort’s final year of high school

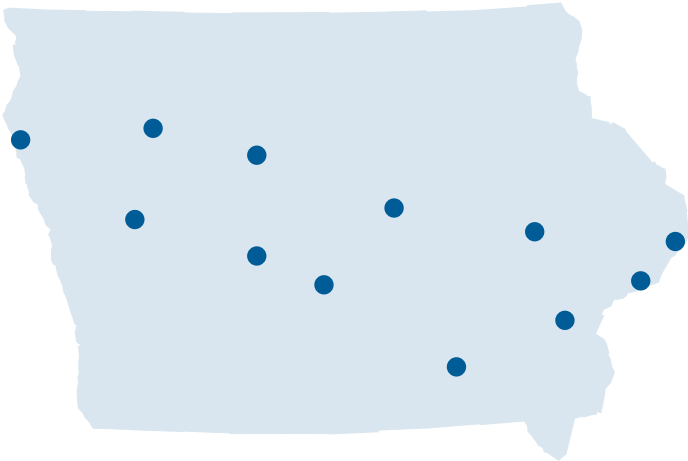
This dollar-for-dollar matched federal grant partnered with 25 high schools in 12 low-income school districts beginning in 2014 to help underserved students complete high school and succeed in college. The cohort was in seventh grade then; this year, 6,295 GEAR UP students were about two months away from high school graduation when COVID-19 forced the closure of their school buildings. While students and families grappled with the sudden loss of person-to-person instruction and counseling, GEAR UP staff quickly implemented a web-based platform to continue to guide them on their postsecondary pathways. We transferred all our services to a virtual environment, including FAFSA completion and virtual coaching. By year-end, 4,400 students had participated in at least one service.



“I went on a lot of college visits trying to **explore my options**. And I did the ACT for free. ... My parents didn’t go to high school in America, so they didn’t know a lot of this stuff. GEAR UP really helped inform us.”

—Antonio Chavez, Davenport West High School

GEAR UP districts



- Cedar Rapids
- Clinton
- Columbus Junction
- Davenport
- Denison
- Des Moines
- Fort Dodge
- Marshalltown
- Ottumwa
- Perry
- Sioux City
- Storm Lake

FAFSA completion among  
GEAR UP students

- 1,800 GEAR UP Iowa students received 3,050 hours of FAFSA support in FY20.
- 51 percent of GEAR UP Iowa students completed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA.
- The FAFSA completion rate for GEAR UP Iowa seniors was 8.9 percent higher than the rate at those schools the year before.

NOTE: FAFSA numbers are as of June 30, 2020, but are not final as students continued to file into FY21.

# VIRTUAL COLLEGE COACH

907

Students  
opted in

⋮

19K

Text messages  
sent

⋮

2,768

Text messages  
received

## Exceeding expectations after only 6 months

The Virtual College Coach, for college-bound students and new college students, launched in January 2020. This texting initiative particularly targets prospective and current Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship and Future Ready Iowa Grant recipients but is available to all students in Iowa. Students who opt in receive timely text reminders and advice, as well as the opportunity to connect with a real live coach. Text messages reach students on a platform they are likely to use, and research shows that text “nudges” combined with direct support are especially helpful to underserved student populations. While it was only active for six months out of FY20, the Virtual College Coach has already exceeded expectations. For instance, the first message, sent January 2, simply introduced the program and was not meant to generate responses—but the engagement rate was an unexpected 20 percent, with most of the responses involving questions about financial aid. Plans for the coming year are to expand the service to include more populations, including high school juniors and their families.

## Breakdown by program as of June 30, 2020

	Future Ready Iowa	GEAR UP Iowa	College Access
Opt-ins	601*	170	313**
Messages sent	12,023	4,448	2,914
Messages received	1,510	810	448
Engagement rate	58.3%	65.3%	28.1%**

\* Of these, 519 were recipients of the Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship.

\*\* Of these, 136 were high school seniors or family members. Texts in FY20 were sent only to these 136, which skews the engagement rate lower. Texts in FY21 will include younger students and families.

“Thank you! My first, so we can use all the **guidance and advice** we can get.”

—Robin Sitzmann, parent of a high school senior



# POSTSECONDARY SCHOOL AUTHORIZATION

285

Schools registered/  
authorized

229

Based in  
Iowa

56

Based out  
of state

27

Student dispute  
cases vetted

## Program oversight and consumer protection

Iowa College Aid is the state agency that authorizes postsecondary schools to operate in Iowa and to offer postsecondary education programs to Iowans, whether from a physical location in Iowa or via distance education. The Postsecondary School Authorization team also ensures that students receive the consumer and financial protections afforded under Iowa law. We accept questions and complaints from any student attending an Iowa postsecondary school and from Iowa residents attending any postsecondary school in the United States.

The team monitors schools under its oversight and takes action, when possible, to close Iowa enrollment when a school is in danger of closing. When Iowa students are displaced by a sudden closure, the team provides advice about options for debt relief or transfer.

The team also helped inform schools about their options resulting from the extraordinary circumstances brought on by COVID-19. In early April 2020, we provided schools with information and resources regarding COVID-19 and surveyed their plans for changes to academic operations. The team also informed Iowa schools about their CARES Act allocations and how to access these grant funds for students.

## State requirements

To offer postsecondary instruction in Iowa, a school must be one of the following:

- Registered in Iowa
- Approved for an exemption from registration
- Covered by the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA)

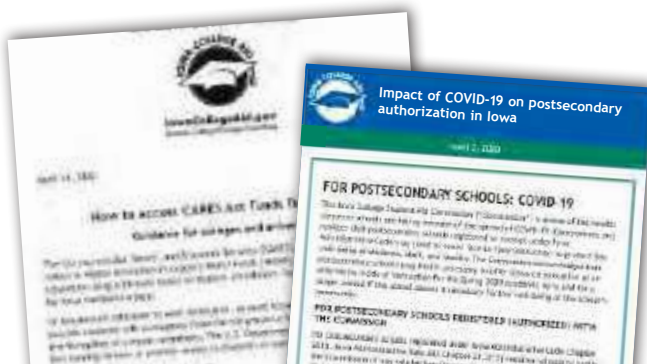
In addition, some schools might be required to demonstrate one or more of the following:

- Financial responsibility including a surety bond payable to the state of Iowa
- Compliance with Iowa's tuition refund policy for students who withdraw
- Disclosures to students about total program cost, estimated fees for licensure exams or licenses, and the rate of students who complete the program

## Covered schools

Postsecondary schools that fall under Iowa College Aid's authority include:

- Degree-granting colleges and universities
- Nondegree-granting colleges and universities
- Other types of schools and education providers such as:
  - Driver education schools
  - Real estate and appraisal educators
  - Private nondegree-granting allied health schools
  - Cosmetology, barbering, and massage therapy schools
  - Schools of religious study
  - Other nondegree-granting vocational schools



43%

Share of Iowans with a college degree in 2017

7%

Decline in college enrollment, 2010-18

21.6

Average ACT score, tied for highest in nation

\$5K+

Average student loan debt per capita in Iowa

Trusted source of data

In addition to continuous evaluation of Iowa College Aid programs, our Research team provides analytics and insight for higher education stakeholders, the media, and the general public. In January, for the first time, we provided every Iowa legislator with an individual dashboard detailing high school graduation rate, FAFSA filing rate, average ACT score, college-going rate, educational level, median income, and participation in Iowa College programs for their House or Senate district. Much of our research can be found on our Higher Education Data Center ([IowaCollegeAid.gov/DataCenter](http://IowaCollegeAid.gov/DataCenter)).



Research conference

More than 150 people attended our “Assessing the Future” conference on college readiness, access, and affordability on November 20, 2019. We heard from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association, ACT, the Education Commission of the States, college presidents, Iowa legislators, and representatives of the Board of Regents and community colleges. Slideshows of most presentations are available at [IowaCollegeAid.gov/Future](http://IowaCollegeAid.gov/Future).

Research publications

- “FAFSA Filing in Iowa,” July 2019
- “Typical Full-Time Undergraduate Student Expenses at Colleges and Universities in Iowa/Academic Year 2019-20,” August 2019
- “2019 Enrollment Report,” December 2019
- “Kibbie Grant/Skilled Workforce Shortage Tuition Grant Program Report FY 2019,” December 2019
- “Home Base Iowa Postsecondary Education Reporting,” January 2020
- “Student & Faculty Diversity Report,” March 2020
- “Educational and Employment Outcomes for the Education and Training Voucher Program” (working paper), May 2020
- “Condition of Higher Education in Iowa 2020,” May 2020 (*excerpts above*)

“I’m really impressed with the work of @IACollegeAid. Appreciate their commitment to **using data and research** to improve outcomes in IA.”

—Tweet from Dr. David Tandberg, SHEEO, conference keynote



# COMMUNICATIONS

146K

Visits to website

3K

Followers on social media

109K

Free publications given away

28K

Digital newsletter subscriptions

## Daily, weekly, and annual outreach

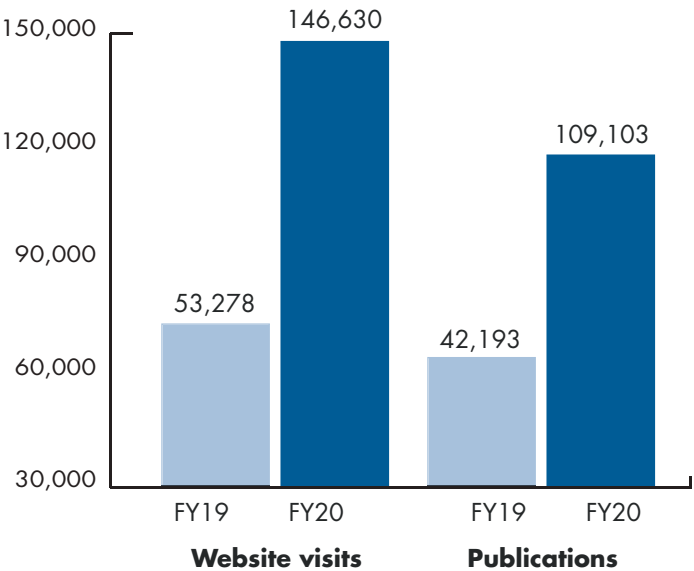
Through digital and print media, Iowa College Aid puts information in the hands of college-bound students and their families. We maintain websites and social media accounts for both the agency and the GEAR UP Iowa program. We reach followers daily through Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram and weekly through our e-newsletters. We also produce annual publications in English and Spanish to help students and families navigate the process of applying for college and financial aid. In FY20, visits to our agency website more than doubled over the year before, following a redesign late in FY19. Distribution of our publications also more than doubled, driven largely by a new flier promoting the Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship. Our social media following and newsletter subscriptions grew over the previous year by 24 percent and 5 percent, respectively. We issued nine news releases in FY20 and were mentioned in Iowa news outlets 73 times.



## Iowa State Fair

More than 10,000 visitors to our booth in the Varied Industries Building August 8–18, 2019, took an informal poll about how college might change their lives and received color-changing cups and color-changing pencils.

## Year-over-year metrics



# FINAL FY20 OPERATING EXPENSES

	STATE APPROPRIATED PROGRAMS	STATE MANDATED/ UNFUNDED PROGRAMS*	POSTSECONDARY REGISTRATION	FEDERAL GRANT/ PROGRAMS	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	FFELP/PLP COLLECTIONS, ASCENDIUM**	TOTALS
FY2020 number of programs	12	5	1	4	3	2	27
FY2020 fed award (admin)/ others				4,475,429			4,475,429
Federal CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Fund	5,100,000						5,100,000
FY2020 state appropriation/grant (scholarship)	79,547,660						79,547,660
FY2020 state admin/fees/others	559,534		256,920	172,115	14,000	4,212,471	5,215,040
Personnel	759,960	191,949	481,831	1,555,176	908,819	19,587	3,917,321
Travel	14,754	3,727	9,354	30,193	17,644	380	76,052
Supplies, printing, postage & equip repair	23,397	5,909	14,834	47,879	27,980	603	120,602
Rent communication & prof/outside serv.	84,290	21,290	53,441	172,490	100,800	2,172	434,483
State legal, audit, state reimbursements	49,037	12,386	31,090	100,348	58,642	1,264	252,766
Advertising & publicity	5,033	1,271	3,191	10,300	6,019	130	25,944
State transfer/reimbursements/IT exp	136,785	34,549	86,725	279,916	163,578	3,525	705,079
<b>Total operating cost</b>	<b>1,073,256</b>	<b>271,080</b>	<b>680,466</b>	<b>2,196,302</b>	<b>1,283,481</b>	<b>27,661</b>	<b>5,532,246</b>
Aid to individuals				581,217			581,217
Transfer to scholarship trust				1,603,175			1,603,175
Grants to K-12 schools/communities (sub grants)				1,082,980	529,854		1,612,834
Scholarships/grants	77,131,085	14,000		58,824			77,203,909
Total expenditures (incl. scholarship)	78,204,341	285,080	680,466	5,522,497	1,813,335	27,661	86,533,380
Fund committed for scholarship and aid	7,805,677						7,805,677
<b>Net gain/loss</b>	<b>(513,722)</b>	<b>(271,080)</b>	<b>(246,777)</b>	<b>(1,209,270)</b>	<b>(1,799,335)</b>	<b>4,184,809</b>	<b>144,626</b>
<b>Overall % total expense</b>	<b>90.37%</b>	<b>0.33%</b>	<b>0.79%</b>	<b>6.38%</b>	<b>2.10%</b>	<b>0.03%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

\*Related to Chapter 261 of Iowa Code—Branstad State Fair Scholarship, loan programs  
 \*\*Great Lakes Higher Education Corp. & Affiliates changed its name to Ascendium Education Group on November 15, 2018



**Because College Changes Everything**

**IOWA COLLEGE AID**

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877-272-4456 • [Info@IowaCollegeAid.gov](mailto:Info@IowaCollegeAid.gov)

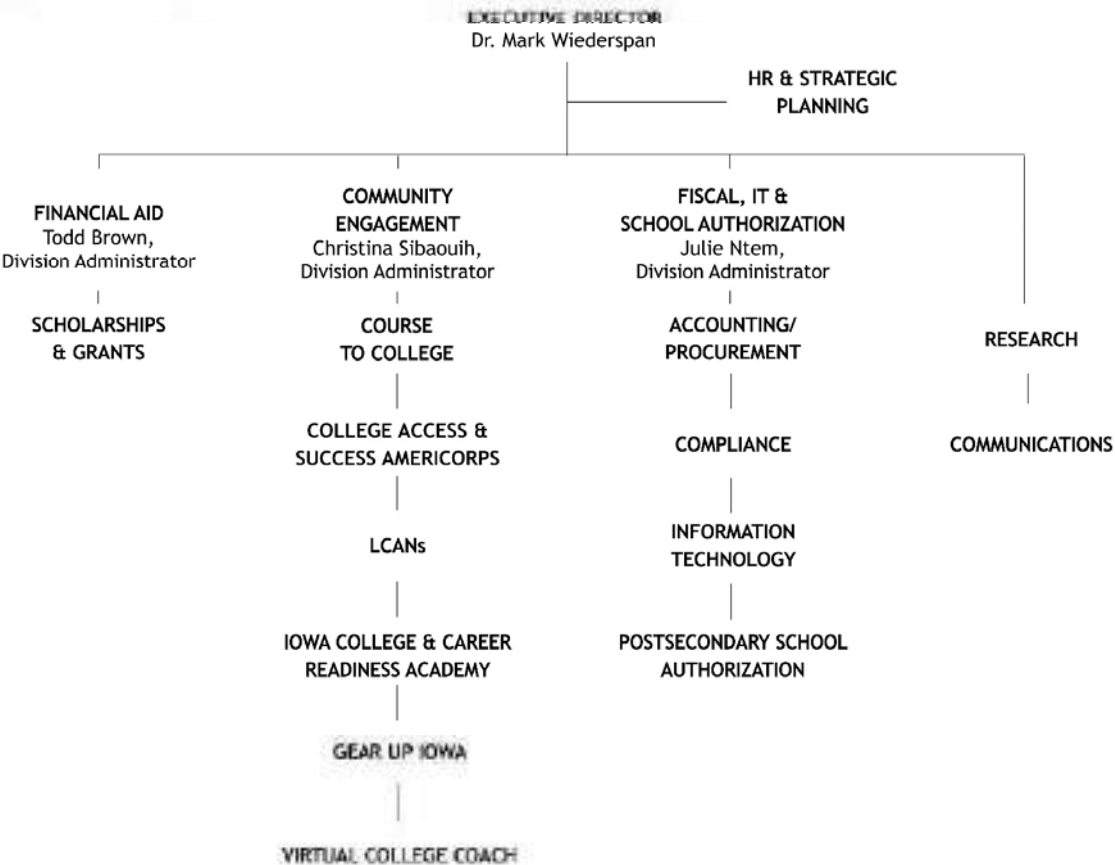


# FY20 Annual Report



Not an ordinary year ...

# Divisions & Teams



# Financial Aid

**\$80M**

State  
appropriations

**8**

Scholarship and  
grant programs

**4**

Loan forgiveness  
programs

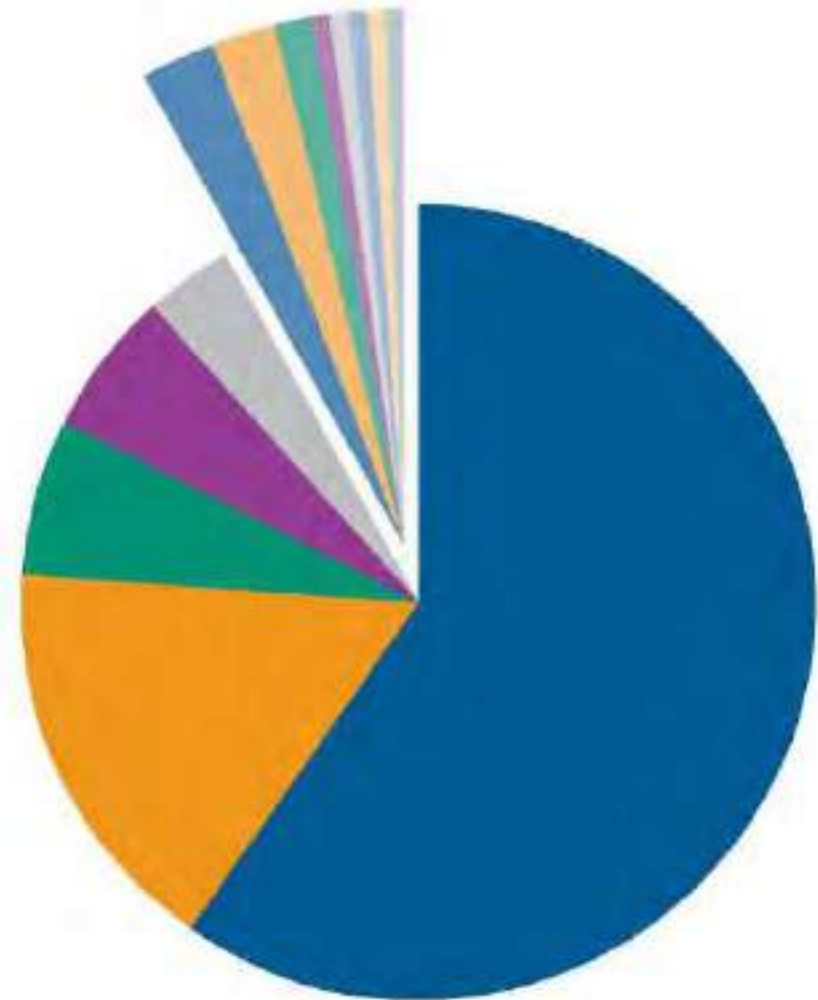
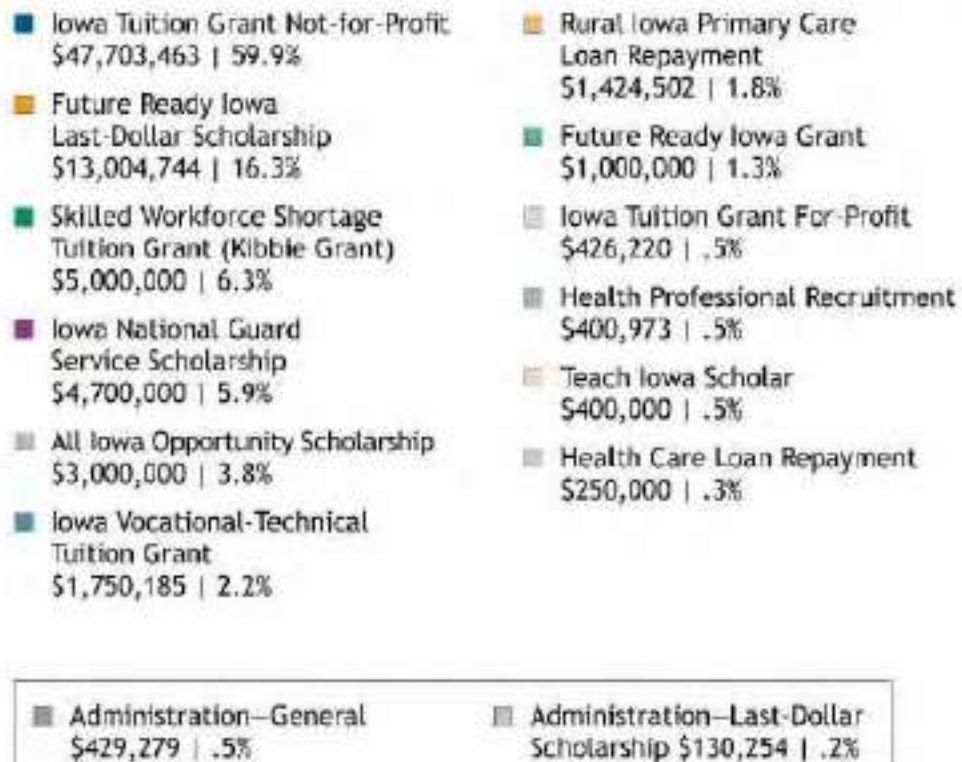
**25K+**

Awards made  
in FY20



# Financial Aid

FY 2020 state appropriations: \$79,619,620



# Financial Aid

	Initial appropriation	Total applicants	Unduplicated recipients	Total awards	Average award	Max award for FY20
Iowa Tuition Grant Not-for-Profit	\$47,703,463	23,353	9,558	\$47,358,049	\$4,955	\$6,000
Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship	\$13,004,744	21,665	6,547	\$14,279,173	\$2,181	\$10,908
Skilled Workforce Shortage Tuition Grant	\$5,000,000	18,899	4,401	\$4,873,288	\$1,107	\$2,825
Iowa National Guard Service Scholarship	\$4,700,000	1,320	895	\$4,723,179	\$5,277	\$8,073
All Iowa Opportunity Scholarship	\$3,000,000	5,237	788	\$3,253,619	\$4,129	\$4,644
Iowa Vocational-Technical Tuition Grant	\$1,750,185	18,899	2,672	\$1,759,272	\$658	\$900
Rural Iowa Primary Care Loan Repayment	\$1,424,502	9	9	\$1,798,425	\$199,825	\$200,000
Future Ready Iowa Grant	\$1,000,000	479	37	\$95,858	\$2,591	\$3,500
Iowa Tuition Grant For-Profit	\$426,220	1,329	359	\$377,443	\$1,051	\$2,500
Health Professional Recruitment	\$400,973	16	14	\$570,000	\$40,714	\$50,000
Teach Iowa Scholar	\$400,000	146	102	\$408,000	\$4,000	\$4,000
Health Care Loan Repayment	\$250,000	110	31	\$136,387	\$4,400	\$6,000
Iowa Teacher Shortage Loan Forgiveness	\$0	31	30	\$80,794	\$2,693	\$7,927
Karen Mlsjak GEAR UP Iowa Scholarship	N/A	267	85	\$58,824	\$692	\$1,200
Education & Training Voucher	\$581,217	422	159	\$581,217	\$3,655	\$5,000
Branstad Iowa State Fair Scholarship	N/A	98	4	\$14,000	\$3,500	\$5,000

# Financial Aid

“Thank you so much for choosing me all these years. This has truly been life-changing!”

—*Jessica Graupmann,*  
*All Iowa Opportunity Scholarship*



“Without this scholarship, I would not be in the position to be pursuing my dream of becoming a registered nurse, as it has been my dream since I was a young child. I am very grateful for your support.”

—*Shalee J. Fuller, Future Ready Iowa*  
*Last-Dollar Scholarship*

# Financial Aid



Governor's news conference  
November 19, 2019



# Course to College

**152**

High schools participated

**52**

High schools opted to be Partner sites

**8K+**

College applications submitted

**342**

Public high schools received FAFSA reports

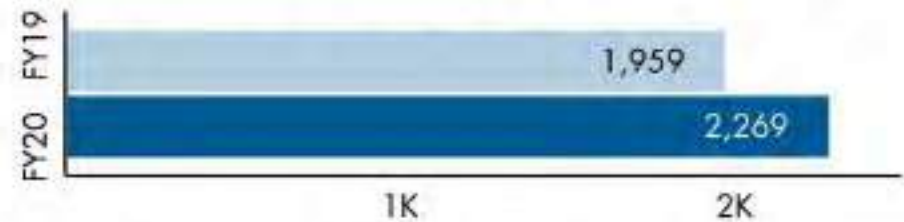
# Course to College

“Every year when we celebrate College Decision Day events, we talk about how important our new high school graduates are to Iowa’s future, and that has never been more true.”

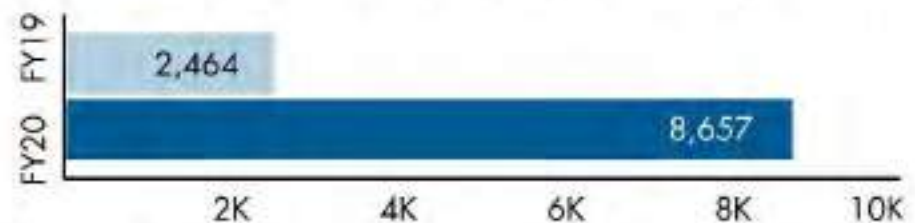
—Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds, addressing Iowa’s high school class of 2020 in a video for College Decision Day



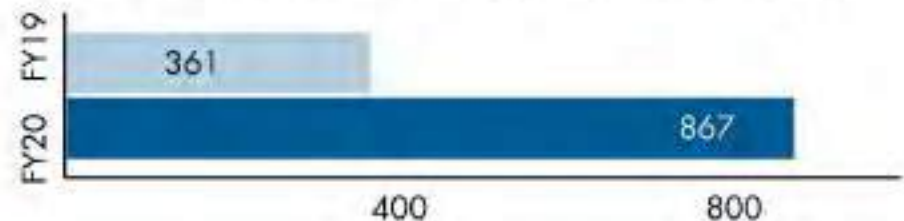
**HS seniors in college application events**



**College applications submitted**



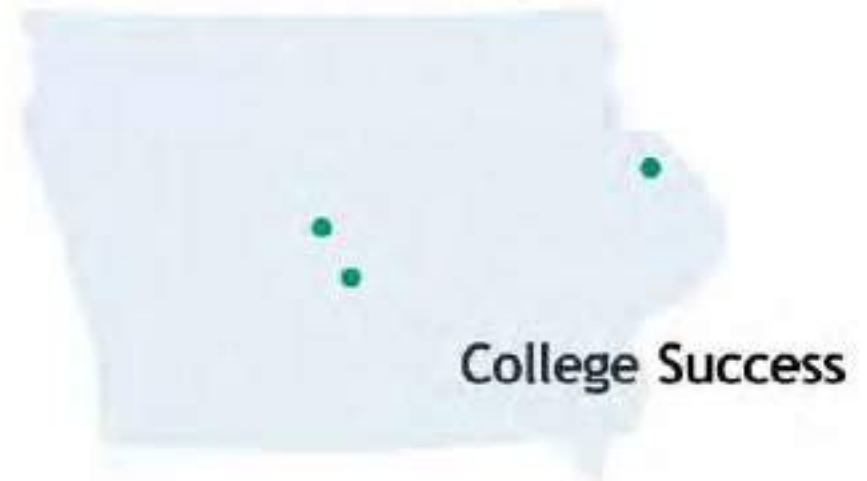
**HS seniors completing year-end survey**



# College Access & Success AmeriCorps



# College Access & Success AmeriCorps



“One of the most rewarding things in my position was being able to connect with students on a completely personal level. I took time to really listen about obstacles each student was facing.”

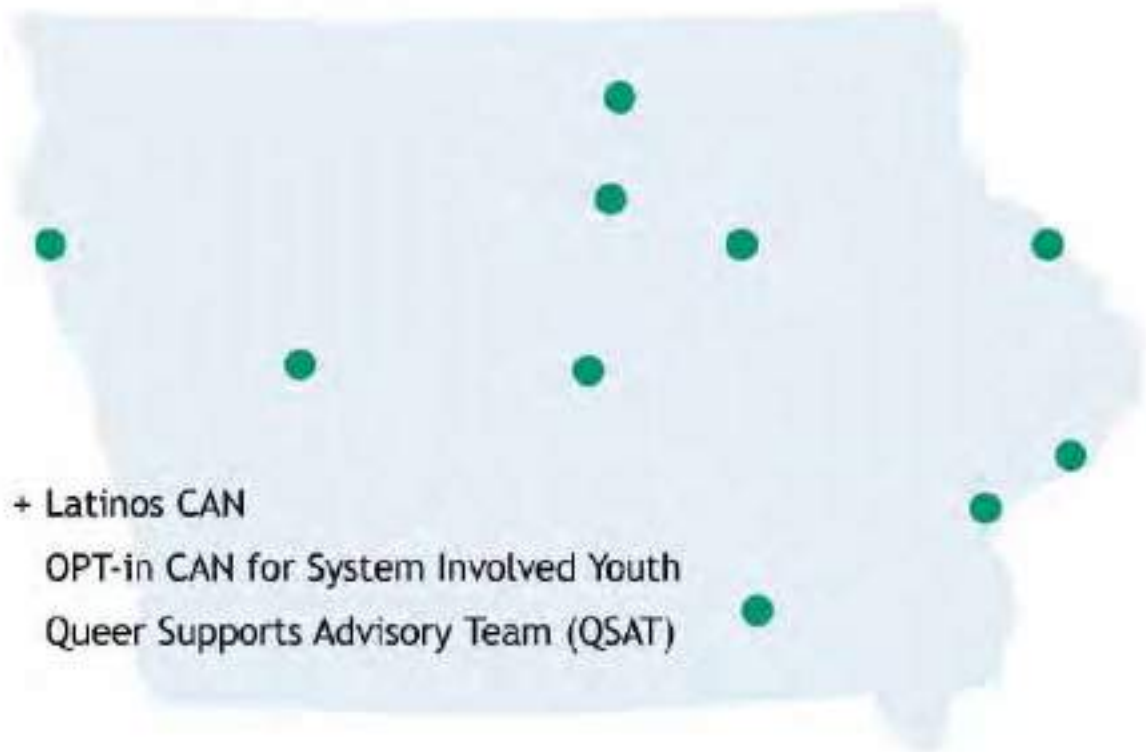
—Morgan Wollesen, College Access Coach in Carroll Region, 2019-20

# Local College Access Networks



# Local College Access Networks

## LCAN communities



+ Latinos CAN

OPT-in CAN for System Involved Youth  
Queer Supports Advisory Team (QSAT)

“Our partners collaborate to reduce barriers to postsecondary success such as affordability, access, persistence, and attainment.”

—Donna Loewen, Ph.D.,  
Dubuque College Access Network  
Coordinator



# Iowa College & Career Readiness Academy

**189**

Enrolled  
in courses

**10**

Professional  
certificates awarded

**7**

Specialist certificates  
awarded

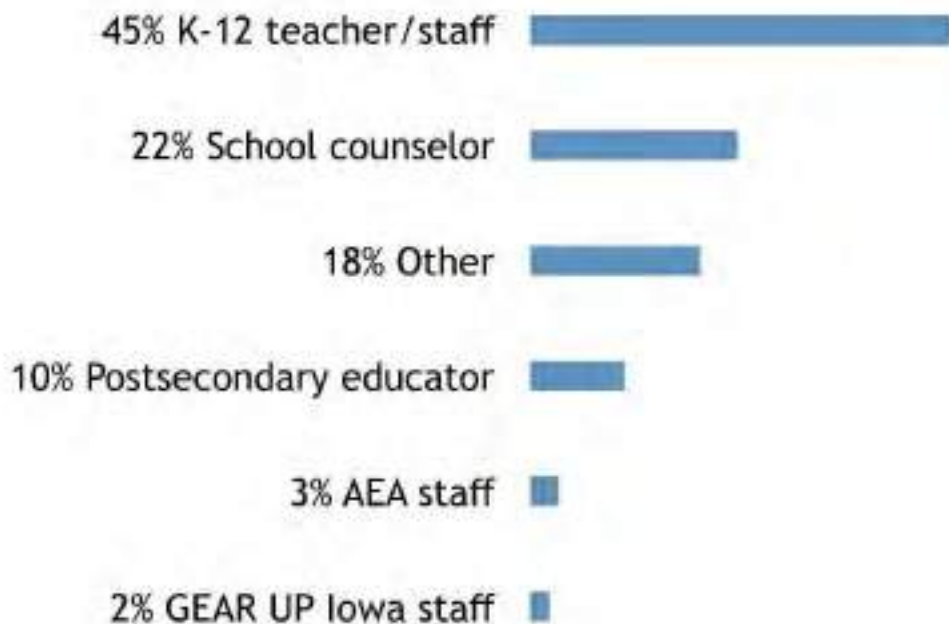
**13**

Badges  
awarded



# Iowa College & Career Readiness Academy

## Participants' job categories



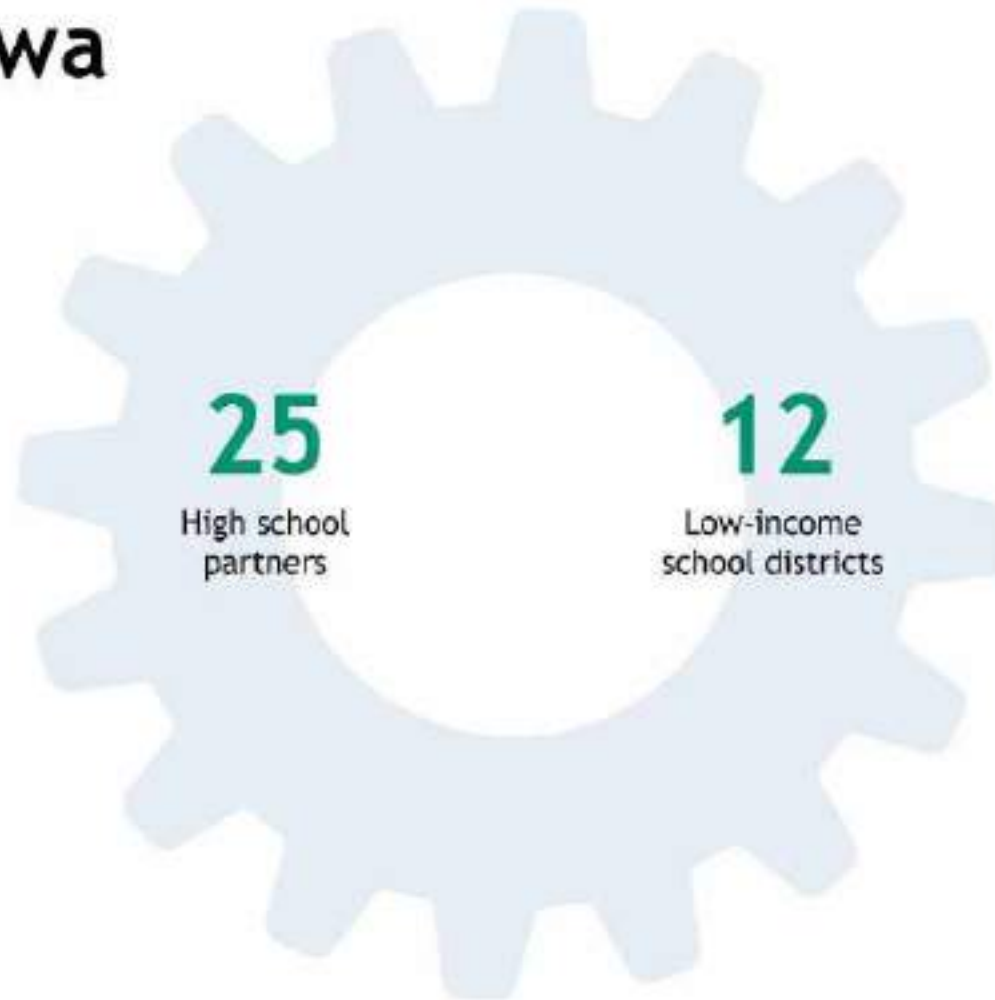
“The Academy increased my understanding of resources and programs available to help our kids be more successful in their planning and futures. I had the opportunity to learn important content and network with many professionals in my field.”

—Julie Chapuis, school counselor, Van Buren County School District, College Access Specialist



# GEAR UP Iowa

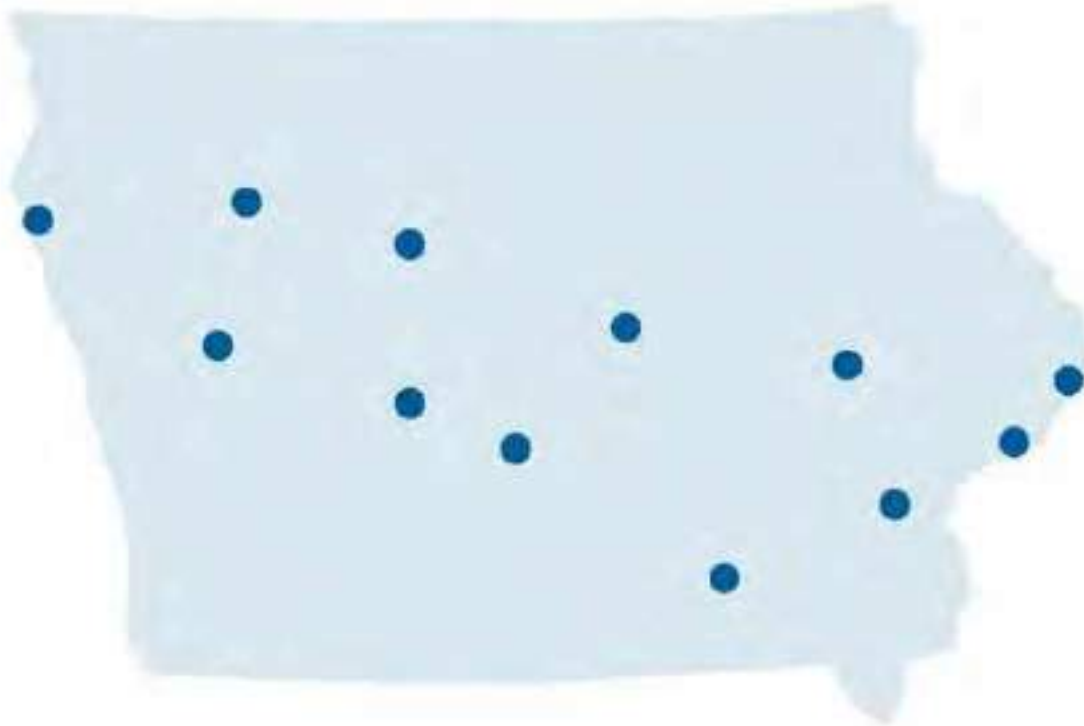
**6K+**  
Students in cohort  
in FY20



**12**  
Low-income  
school districts

**4K+**  
Students received  
some form of service

# GEAR UP Iowa



"I went on a lot of college visits trying to explore my options. And I did the ACT for free. ... My parents didn't go to high school in America, so they didn't know a lot of this stuff. GEAR UP really helped inform us."

—Antonio Chavez,  
Davenport West High School



# Virtual College Coach

**907**

Students  
opted in

**19K**

Text messages  
sent

**2,768**

Text messages  
received

# Virtual College Coach

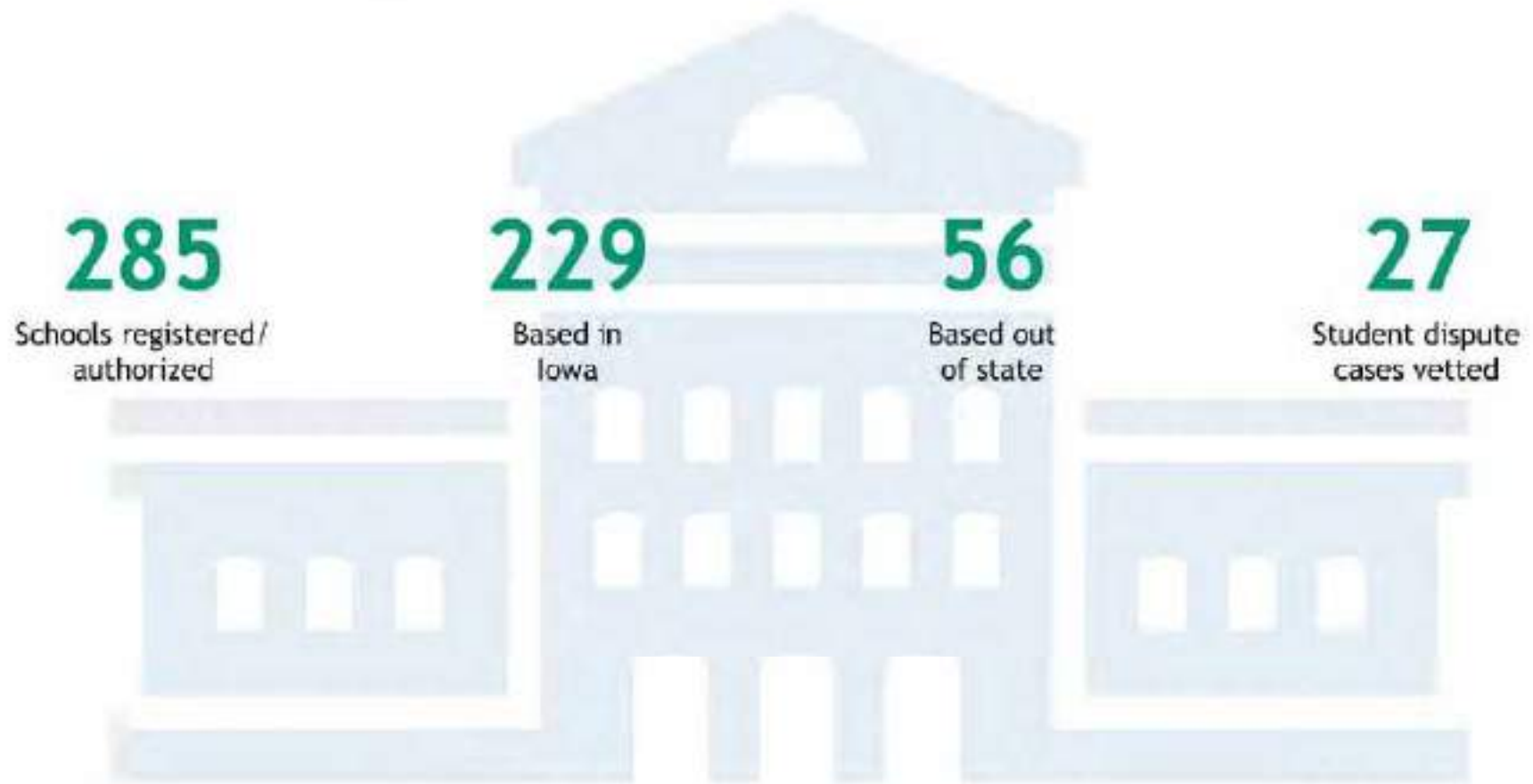
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Messages sent	12,023	4,448	2,914
Messages received	1,510	810	448
Engagement rate	58.3%	65.3%	28.1%

“Thank you! My first, so we can use all the guidance and advice we can get.”

—Robin Sitzmann, parent of a high school senior



# Postsecondary School Authorization



# Research

43%

Share of Iowans with a college degree in 2017

7%

Decline in college enrollment, 2010-18

21.6

Average ACT score, tied for highest in nation

\$5K+

Average student loan debt per capita in Iowa

—“Condition of Higher Education in Iowa 2020”

# Research



Research conference  
November 20, 2019

"I'm really impressed with the work of @IACollegeAid. Appreciate their commitment to using data and research to improve outcomes in IA."

—*Tweet from Dr. David Tandberg, SHEEO, conference keynote*



# Communications

**146K**

Visits to  
website

**3K**

Followers on  
social media

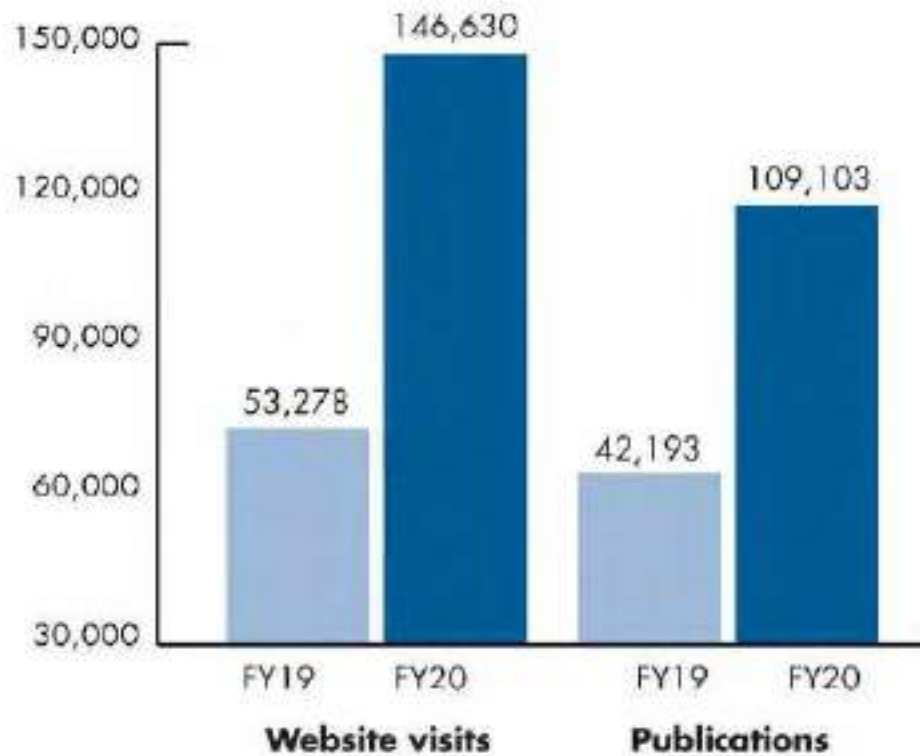
**109K**

Free publications  
given away

**28K**

Digital newsletter  
subscriptions

# Communications



**Iowa State Fair  
August 8-18, 2019**

# Final FY20 Operating Expenses

	State Appropriated Programs	State Matched / Unfunded Programs	Postsecondary Registration	Federal Grants / Programs	Community Engagement	FPEUP / PJP Collections, Accountant	Totals
FY2020 number of programs	12	3	1	4	3	2	27
FY2020 fed award (admin)/others				4,475,429			4,475,429
Federal CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Fund	5,100,000						5,100,000
FY2020 state appropriation/grant (scholarship)	79,547,660						79,547,660
FY2020 state admin/fees/others	599,534		256,920	172,315	14,000	4,212,471	5,215,040
Personnel	759,960	195,949	481,831	1,555,176	908,819	19,587	3,917,321
Travel	14,754	3,727	9,334	30,193	17,644	380	76,032
Supplies, printing, postage & equip repair	23,397	5,909	14,834	47,879	27,980	603	120,602
Rent communication & prof/outside serv.	84,290	21,290	53,441	172,490	100,800	2,172	434,483
State legal, audit, state reimbursements	49,037	12,386	31,090	100,348	58,642	1,254	252,766
Advertising & publicity	5,033	1,271	3,191	10,300	6,019	130	25,944
State transfer/reimbursements/IT exp	136,785	34,549	86,725	279,916	163,578	3,525	705,079
<b>Total operating cost</b>	<b>1,073,256</b>	<b>271,080</b>	<b>680,466</b>	<b>2,196,302</b>	<b>1,283,481</b>	<b>27,651</b>	<b>5,532,246</b>
Add to individuals				581,217			581,217
Transfer to scholarship trust				1,603,175			1,603,175
Grants to K-12 schools/communities (sub grants)				1,082,980	529,854		1,612,834
Scholarships/grants	77,131,085	14,000		58,824			77,203,909
<b>Total expenditures (incl. scholarship)</b>	<b>78,204,341</b>	<b>285,080</b>	<b>680,466</b>	<b>5,522,497</b>	<b>1,813,335</b>	<b>27,651</b>	<b>86,533,380</b>
Fund committed for scholarship and aid	7,805,677						7,805,677
<b>Net gain/loss</b>	<b>(513,722)</b>	<b>(271,080)</b>	<b>(246,777)</b>	<b>(1,209,270)</b>	<b>(1,799,335)</b>	<b>11,841,809</b>	<b>144,626</b>
<b>Overall % total expense</b>	<b>90.37%</b>	<b>0.33%</b>	<b>0.79%</b>	<b>6.38%</b>	<b>2.10%</b>	<b>0.03%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>



## GEAR UP Iowa: ACT Initiatives and Outcomes

## 1. WHY TAKE THE ACT?

The ACT exam is a critical step for students interested in attending four-year colleges and universities. Not only are test scores often required for admission, but when a student indicates interest in an institution by having ACT scores sent there, the institution can reach out to that student with information and admission support. Early contact and relationships with the college might help motivate a student to attend and aid them in navigating the steps required to successfully enroll. While the ACT is not required for community college admission in Iowa, community college students still benefit from taking the ACT, which can fulfill the requirement of a placement test. In addition, knowing their ACT score might help a student realize that they are qualified for a more selective college or university (Hoxby & Avery, 2012). Students who do not take entrance exams often underestimate their potential (Goodman, 2016).

Access to the ACT exam is frequently limited for low-income students who might not have access to information and assistance regarding fee waivers or be able to attend an exam administered on the weekend. Therefore, some states have implemented statewide ACT testing, making the exam free for students and available during the school day. Both increasing the accessibility to test sites and compelling students to take entrance exams through statewide mandatory testing are associated with positive trends in postsecondary enrollment, persistence, and completion (Bulman, 2015).

States that have implemented mandatory statewide testing increased the percentage of students who enroll in college. In Maine, mandatory ACT testing increased postsecondary enrollment by 2 to 3 percentage points (Hurwitz et al., 2015). Hyman (2017) found an increase of 0.6 percentage points in college enrollment with the adoption of mandatory statewide testing in Michigan, and that increase doubled for the lowest-income students. A study of mandatory testing in Colorado, Illinois, and Maine revealed that statewide testing changes postsecondary choices, with some evidence showing a decrease in two-year enrollments and an increase in enrollment at four-year institutions (Klasik, 2013). Goodman (2016) showed that 10 percent of students who would not take the ACT unless mandated end up enrolling in a more selective institution than they would have chosen without exam scores.

Given the benefits of taking the ACT, preparing students to take and succeed on the ACT is crucial. Students who reported feeling underprepared for their second ACT exam scored lower than students who felt prepared, regardless of the type of test preparation they received (Moore et al., 2019). While the research on test preparation services is mixed, the *What Works Clearinghouse* shows that test tutoring and coaching have a positive and significant effect on test scores. Intervention models that include a practice test followed by test-preparation services resulted in increases in the final ACT exam score (Filizola, 2008; McMann, 1994).

## 2. GEAR UP IOWA ACT SERVICES

GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) is a federal grant program that awards funding to states and large partnerships with the goal of increasing postsecondary attainment rates for low-income students. GEAR UP Iowa serves a cohort of students beginning in seventh grade and follows them through their first year of college following high school graduation. Students receive services such as tutoring, college and career mentoring, trips to college campuses, and, in some programs, a college scholarship.

Iowa College Aid is currently administering its second GEAR UP grant (GUI 2.0). We were awarded \$11 million over the course of the grant to pay for services and staff placed in the schools. GUI 2.0 partnered with 12 school districts, each with greater than 50 percent of students eligible for free or reduced priced lunches. GUI 2.0 began with 6,535 seventh-graders in 2014-15 and added 2,583 students during ninth grade to offset attrition. The cohort of students graduated from high school in the spring of 2020.

GUI 2.0 chose to focus on ACT test preparation and administration during the students' 11th-grade year. To do this, we contracted with Cambridge Educational Services (CES) to administer a practice ACT exam and provide training and materials to schools so teachers and counselors could offer in-class lessons related to the ACT. We also required all GUI 2.0 partners to provide districtwide ACT testing.

### 2.1 ACT Pre-Test

Administration of the ACT practice test differed by GUI 2.0 district. Schools identified four-hour periods of time for students to take the test, with some offering it on multiple days. Tests were then sent to CES for scoring. While some districts chose to give the test to all students, others selected students to take the exam or allowed students to self-select into taking it. Typically, the larger school districts had lower levels of participation. Pre-test data was valuable for identifying deficits in student knowledge and providing targeted services to address those deficits.

### 2.2 ACT Test Preparation

Test preparation services were developed by CES but were designed to be provided to the students through school district teachers and other staff. CES held training sessions for school personnel on how to use the materials they provided. Training included information on how to interpret results from the practice ACT exam. The practice exam was a crucial component of the test preparation model as it identified where students were lacking in knowledge and needed to spend additional time studying. Test preparation services were then designed to target those deficits with additional curriculum and test-taking practice. GUI 2.0 students also received general test-taking tips through preparation services.

Test preparation was delivered in several formats. Here we provide a brief summary of services by district.

- Cedar Rapids: ACT test preparation varied by school. George Washington High School provided services in the evenings and weekends in two-hour blocks. John F. Kennedy High School made CES textbooks available to students and offered in-person tutoring and coaching on the weekends in two-hour blocks. Thomas Jefferson High School provided services separately for ESL students and allowed all students to seek assistance during lunch or free periods. At Metro High School, GUI 2.0 coaches worked one-on-one with students who opted in to test preparation. Teachers presented test-taking information in slides to all students.
- Clinton: GUI 2.0 students at Clinton High School participated in 90 minutes of test preparation each week starting in February and ending in late March.

- **Columbus Junction:** Teachers administered test preparation curriculum during homeroom classes for 20 minutes at least once a week for six weeks.
- **Davenport:** Davenport schools implemented test preparation services differently in each school. Central High School students could opt in to preparation sessions based on the results of their pre-ACT exam, led by teachers who taught the subject in need of additional practice. North High School provided materials to students who participated in small group study sessions during homeroom periods. West High School provided test preparation services on weekends and during free periods, focused on test subject material.
- **Denison:** Schoolwide test preparation services were administered during second-semester student seminars.
- **Des Moines:** At East High School, GUI 2.0 coaches and teachers met with students during homeroom periods to go over specific skills based on the pre-test. Hoover and Lincoln high schools targeted students who took the pre-test with five ACT test preparation sessions during homeroom times, one for each subject test and one covering test-taking advice. North High School planned for up to 30 hours of CES test preparation curriculum, taught by high school teachers. Roosevelt High School offered one full day of ACT test preparation curriculum, with follow-up sessions offered for four days during student seminars leading up to the final ACT exam.
- **Fort Dodge:** Two four-hour workshops were held on weekends in November. The first focused on reading and science, the second on English and writing.
- **Marshalltown:** No in-person ACT test preparation services were provided.
- **Ottumwa:** Three test preparation events were held, each for four hours.
- **Perry:** No in-person ACT test preparation services were provided.
- **Sioux City:** While Sioux City has three high schools—East, North, and West—all schools used the same implementation strategy for administering CES curriculum. ACT test preparation services were offered twice a week in November and December for one to two hours a session.
- **Storm Lake:** One test preparation session was held in March. The session was four hours long and covered material from all four ACT test sections.

## 2.3 ACT Districtwide Testing

GUI 2.0 worked with partner districts to implement districtwide testing for the GUI 2.0 cohort. Districtwide testing was new to nine of the 12 districts. Two—Des Moines and Columbus Junction—had previously provided districtwide testing. Denison did not offer districtwide testing but chose to give all students vouchers to pay for the ACT on their own time. GUI 2.0 staff worked with ACT and a district coordinator to register all students for the ACT to be administered in either early or late spring, including working with students who needed accommodations. The test was administered during the school day and was free for all students.

### 3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

In order to summarize ACT activities completed by the GUI 2.0 cohort, we looked at participation rates by district and demographics (Section 4). We then explored the outcomes on the official ACT exam based on whether students took the pre-test, participated in in-person test preparation through CES, or both (Section 5.1). Finally, we looked at the overall ACT completion rates and the effect of districtwide testing (Section 5.2).

#### 3.1 Data

The data used in this analysis come from several sources.

##### 3.1.1 GUI 2.0 School Districts

To be GUI 2.0 partners, school districts were required to submit data to Iowa College Aid three times a year. In each data submission we requested current enrollment information, including demographic data and entry and exit dates (if applicable). At the end of each semester we collected data on school attendance, course enrollment, final grades, and standardized test scores. These data were linked by each student's state ID number.

Each district was also required to identify a person in the school to report on student participation in GUI 2.0 services. In some schools this person was hired specifically for GUI 2.0; in others a current employee (typically a counselor) was responsible for implementing the program. Iowa College Aid contracted with SCRIBE, a data management system that allowed contacts in the school to enter data regarding services, including the name, general category of service, date, and time spent in that activity for each student. We use this service data to identify ACT test preparation services received by GUI 2.0 students.

##### 3.1.2 Iowa Department of Education (IDE)

We received data from the Iowa Department of Education on GUI 2.0 students annually. These data included enrollment, demographic, attendance, and standardized test information. We used this dataset to verify and fill in any missing data from the school, matched by the state ID number. This data has a one-year delay, prompting us to go directly to the schools for initial data that could be used to inform our decisions in an actionable time period.

IDE also shares data on high school seniors in Iowa with Iowa College Aid. After each senior class has graduated, Iowa College Aid receives a certified file of senior enrollment by school, including demographic variables; however, this file lacks identification of whether a student graduated. Iowa College Aid has received senior enrollment files starting with the graduating class of 2016. This information is used to compare trends in ACT completion for high school seniors in cohorts prior to the GUI 2.0 cohort (Section 5.2).

##### 3.1.3 ACT

Scores on the final exam came from ACT. We matched ACT data to IDE and school data by creating a unique identifier from first name, last name, and date of birth. We used a phonetic matching algorithm available in SAS, a statistical analysis platform utilized to analyze data, to account for slight differences in name spellings.

##### 3.1.4 Cambridge Educational Services

CES provided practice test scores to Iowa College Aid. After each practice test was administered, tests were returned to CES for processing. A detailed report was provided to the schools and to Iowa College Aid outlining overall scores as well as exam sections where each student underperformed, allowing for targeted tutoring. CES also provided aggregate data on online test preparation usage by school but could not link each online account to an individual student.

### 3.2 Methodology

We used a linear regression model to determine the effects of having participated in GUI 2.0 ACT services (see Section 5.1). The sample for this analysis included only GUI 2.0 students who completed the final ACT exam. The outcome variables in these models are scores on the ACT exam, including English, math, science, reading, and composite test sections. We used demographic control variables including free or reduced price lunch status (FRPL), individualized education plan status (IEP), English learner status (ESL), gender, and race or ethnicity. We also controlled for academic aptitude prior to the implementation of ACT services using scores on the Iowa Assessment reading and math sections, taken during 10th grade. The high school each student attended in 10th grade was included in the regression as a fixed effect. Finally, the regression included three binary variables of interest indicating whether a student took the practice test, whether they received any in-person GUI 2.0 test preparation service, and a dummy variable interacting practice test and test preparation participation.

In Section 5.2 we analyzed the effect of GUI 2.0 ACT services on ACT completion rates. We used 2016 through 2020 senior class rosters provided to Iowa College Aid by IDE and matched students to ACT records on first name, last name, and date of birth. To account for minor variations in name spelling, we used a phonetic matching algorithm available in SAS. Using a logistic regression model, with whether a student completed the ACT exam as the binary outcome variable, we estimated the effect of having been enrolled in a GUI 2.0 school district in the graduating class of 2020, the year the GUI 2.0 cohort graduated. We constructed three models. The first included only the predictors of interest, GUI 2.0 district status, 2020 graduating class status, and a dummy variable interacting the two. In the second model, we included graduation year as a linear predictor. Finally, in the third model, we included the same demographic control variables as Section 5.1. For each model the average marginal effect of having graduated from a GUI 2.0 district in 2020 was calculated using the STATA package “margins.”

## 4. GUI 2.0 ACT SERVICE PARTICIPATION

In this section we explore the level of engagement for each of our three ACT initiatives (practice testing, test preparation, and ACT completion). Table 1 breaks down participation rates by GUI 2.0 district. Of GUI 2.0 students enrolled in a partner school during 11th grade, we found that 41 percent took the ACT practice test offered through CES.

Approximately 15 percent of students participated in in-person test preparation. CES provided test preparation products that could be delivered in-person or online. Unfortunately, we had no way to identify which students participated in the online test preparation, but we do know that approximately 300 students used the online system for 2 hours on average. Two schools—Marshalltown and Perry—had no in-person test preparation; however, they did have online participation. In Marshalltown, 74 students used the online tool for approximately 2 hours, on average. In Perry, 12 students logged on for an average of 8 hours each.

Finally, through districtwide testing and fee waivers, 70 percent of GUI 2.0 students completed the ACT exam. This rate greatly exceeded our goal of 58 percent, set as a 10 percentage point increase over baseline ACT data from previous years, which showed that 48 percent of students in GUI 2.0 districts typically take the ACT.

**Table 1 : Participation in ACT services by district**

	Completed ACT practice test	ACT in-person test prep participation	Average hours	Completed ACT exam	GUI 2.0 population
All GEAR UP	2,841 (41%)	1,068 (15%)	6.8	4,881 (70%)	7,008
Cedar Rapids	314 (27%)	143 (12%)	2.0	829 (71%)	1,175
Clinton	74 (36%)	78 (38%)	8.0	97 (47%)	206
Columbus	40 (83%)	45 (94%)	1.4	39 (81%)	48
Davenport	464 (54%)	118 (14%)	1.2	552 (65%)	854
Denison	183 (90%)	152 (75%)	14.1	148 (73%)	204
Des Moines	296 (13%)	353 (16%)	8.9	1,706 (75%)	2,278
Fort Dodge	184 (67%)	22 (8%)	4.5	191 (70%)	274
Marshalltown	137 (37%)	0 (0%)	0	160 (43%)	371
Ottumwa	145 (49%)	22 (7%)	4.5	230 (78%)	296
Perry	157 (95%)	0 (0%)	0	142 (86%)	166
Sioux City	714 (72%)	130 (13%)	5.1	663 (67%)	990
Storm Lake	133 (91%)	<10	4.0	124 (85%)	146

When looking at ACT service participation by demographics (Table 2), we see large discrepancies. Overall, females were more likely to participate in CES services and took the ACT at higher rates.

When looking at race or ethnicity, Black or African American and Native American or Pacific Islander (categorized as “Other” due to small numbers) students were least likely to participate in any ACT-related services. Interestingly, Latinx students participated in practice testing and test preparation services at rates near White students but lagged in completing the ACT.

Students with positive FRPL, IEP, or ESL statuses all participated in services and completed the ACT at lower rates than those without.

**Table 2 : Participation in ACT services by demographics**

	Completed ACT practice test	ACT in-person test prep participation	Average hours	Completed ACT exam	N
All GEAR UP	2,841 (41%)	1,068 (15%)	6.8	4,881 (70%)	7,008
Gender					
Female	1,481 (44%)	613 (18%)	6.6	2,476 (74%)	3,356
Male	1,360 (37%)	455 (12%)	6.2	2,405 (66%)	3,652
Race/Ethnicity					
Asian	147 (41%)	80 (23%)	7.7	308 (87%)	355
Black or African American	244 (25%)	122 (13%)	6.2	586 (61%)	968
Latinx	813 (46%)	274 (15%)	6.3	1,184 (66%)	1,781
Multiple	120 (33%)	50 (14%)	4.7	231 (64%)	359
White	1,497 (43%)	537 (15%)	5.5	2,540 (73%)	3,471
Other	20 (27%)	<10	-	32 (43%)	74
FRPL					
Yes	1,735 (34%)	693 (14%)	7.6	3,249 (65%)	5,038
No	1,106 (56%)	375 (19%)	5.4	1,632 (83%)	1,970
IEP					
Yes	226 (24%)	58 (6%)	5.9	421 (44%)	960
No	2,615 (43%)	1,010 (17%)	6.9	4,460 (74%)	6,048
ESL					
Yes	289 (31%)	140 (15%)	1.9	562 (59%)	946
No	2,552 (42%)	928 (15%)	6.2	4,319 (71%)	6,062

## 5. ACT OUTCOMES

In this section we present results of two analyses on the effect of GUI 2.0 services on final ACT scores and ACT completion rates.

### 5.1 Impact of the GUI 2.0 Practice Test and In-Person Test Preparation

When GUI 2.0 hired CES to provide practice testing and ACT preparation services, the intent was that all students would take the practice test. From practice test results, students would be directed toward services and preparation intended to improve scores on test sections that were identified as in need. This sequence of events did not occur at the rates we had hoped due to implementation challenges (see Section 6.2). Here we explore the relationship between test scores and test preparation.

We modeled final ACT exam scores using linear regression, including demographic variables and 10th-grade scores on standardized math and reading tests as independent variables. The effects of having taken the practice test, participating in test preparation, or doing both are provided in Table 3. We ran the model with scores on each of the ACT subject tests as outcomes, as well as the composite score.

**Table 3: CES test preparation services and ACT scores**

	English	Math	Reading	Science	Composite
Pre-ACT	.447* (.184)	.156 (.147)	.456* (.203)	.581** (.176)	.408** (.146)
Test preparation	-.058 (.281)	-.056 (.803)	-.256 (.309)	-.050 (.268)	-.074 (.223)
Pre-ACT and test preparation	1.317*** (.345)	.416 (.276)	.728 (.380)	.529 (.329)	.731** (.274)

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$

Table 3 shows that participating in test preparation without the practice exam did not have a significant effect on final ACT scores, in any subject test or the composite score. Meanwhile, taking a practice ACT exam did increase scores on the ACT in all subjects, except math, by about a half-point each. Students who took the practice test and participated in test preparation services experienced the largest increase in English and composite scores, at 1.3 and 0.7 points, respectively. No significant relationship was found for math, reading, or science scores.

## 5.2 Districtwide Testing and ACT Test-Taking Rates

GUI 2.0 districts were required to provide districtwide ACT testing during the school day to remove cost and timing barriers for disadvantaged students. Eleven of 12 districts did so, while the remaining district provided vouchers for students to take the exam outside school hours at no cost. As a result, 70 percent of GUI 2.0 students completed the official ACT exam.

To determine the impact of districtwide testing, we used a difference-in-differences analysis to compare ACT completion rates of GUI 2.0 students to those of non-GUI 2.0 schools or of earlier cohorts at GUI 2.0 schools. If GUI 2.0 had an effect, we would expect to see a rise in ACT completion rates for the GUI 2.0 cohort (graduating class of 2020). We completed this analysis at the district level; therefore, students who were not officially in the GUI 2.0 cohort (defined during ninth grade) yet enrolled in GUI 2.0 schools the same year as the cohort are included in the ACT completion rates. We used senior enrollment data from IDE, which did not indicate whether a senior graduated. If a student was enrolled multiple years as a senior, we deleted that student from all but the first year of enrollment.

Figure 1 shows ACT completion rates for GUI 2.0 and non-GUI 2.0 districts over time. If the GUI 2.0 program was the only influencing factor, we would expect that pre-intervention, GUI 2.0 and non-GUI 2.0 schools would show similar trends in completion rates. Figure 1 shows a gradual increase for both GUI 2.0 and non-GUI 2.0 schools from 2016 to 2018. In 2019, ACT completion rates drop for non-GUI 2.0 districts but continue to rise for GUI 2.0 districts. GUI 2.0 attempted to change the entire school culture regarding college. If it was successful, the 2019 ACT completion rates might be starting to show a GUI 2.0 effect.

**Figure 1: ACT completion rates**

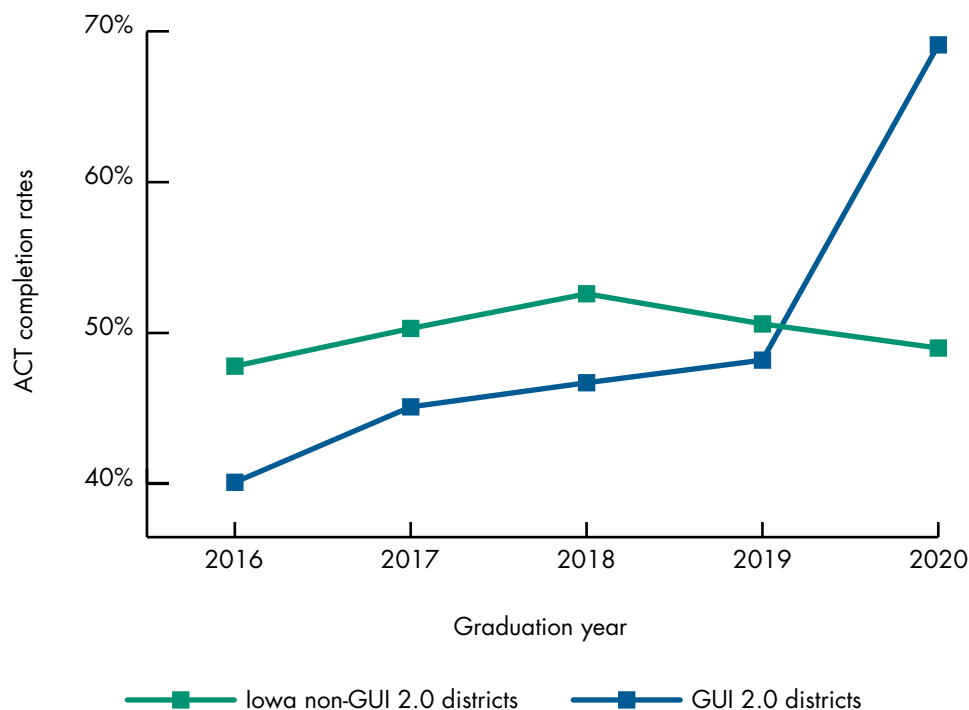


Table 4 lists the results from the logistic regression models run on the outcome variable of whether a student took the ACT exam. The design of the three models follows an analysis of GEAR UP outcomes by Bowman et al. (2016). Model 1 considered three binary predictor variables: enrollment in a GUI 2.0 district, graduation in 2020, and graduation in 2020 from a GUI 2.0 district. Model 2 added the linear trends in graduation year, and Model 3 included demographic control variables. All three models included school of enrollment as a fixed effect. In each model, the average marginal effect of graduation from a GUI 2.0 school in 2020 was approximately 27 percentage points.

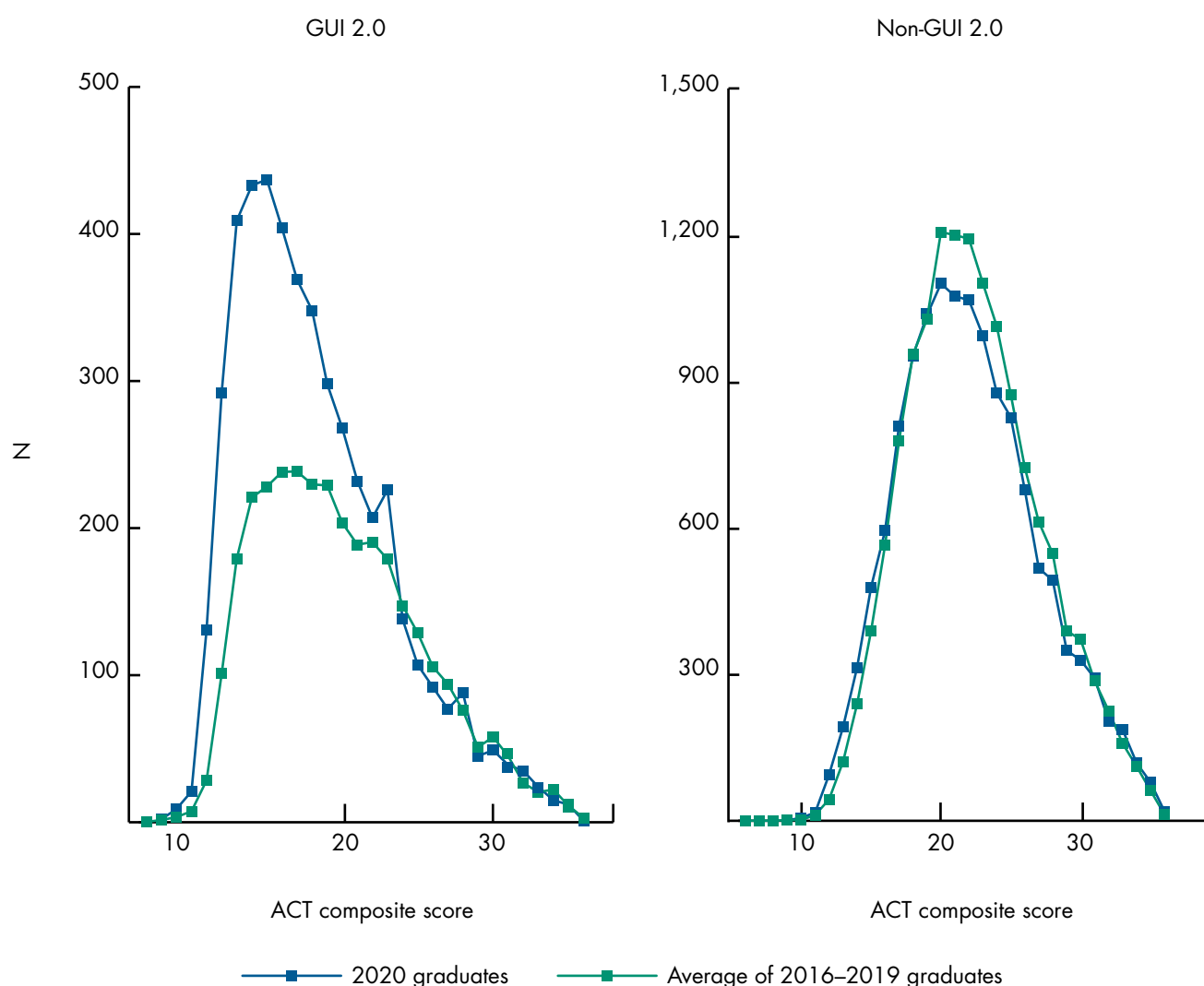
**Table 4: GUI 2.0 status and ACT completion**

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
GUI 2.0 district	-1.105*** (.163)	-1.097*** (.163)	-.391* (.183)
Class of 2020	-.069*** (.014)	-.204*** (.019)	-.313*** (.020)
GUI 2.0 district x class of 2020	1.150*** (.033)	1.148*** (.033)	1.390*** (.041)
<b>Average marginal effect (GUI 2.0 district x class of 2020)</b>	<b>.265*** (.007)</b>	<b>.265*** (.007)</b>	<b>.269*** (.008)</b>
Graduation year (linear)		.054*** (.005)	.062*** (.005)
Asian			.368*** (.038)
Black			-.351*** (.029)
Latinx			-.445*** (.023)
Multiple races or ethnicities			-.119*** (.034)
Native American			-.707*** (.100)
Pacific Islander			-.742*** (.137)
FRPL			-1.237*** (.013)
ESL			-1.067*** (.043)
IEP			-2.206*** (.025)
Female			.575*** (.011)

\*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Given that GUI 2.0 clearly increased the proportion of students in GUI 2.0 districts who completed the ACT, it is interesting to consider which students were impacted. The distributions of scores for GUI 2.0 and non-GUI 2.0 districts are shown in Figure 2. The average of the pre-intervention graduating classes is compared to the 2020 graduating class in both cases. For the non-GUI 2.0 districts, the distribution of scores remains roughly constant, though the total number of students completing the exam drops slightly. For GUI 2.0 districts, we see that the peak of the 2020 graduating class score distribution shifted toward lower scores, while the number of students taking the ACT at the higher end of the score distribution remained about the same as pre-GUI 2.0 years. The ACT scores for students typically admitted to Iowa's four-year public institutions fall between 21 and 28. With districtwide testing, approximately 100 more students from GEAR UP schools fall into that ACT range than the previous four years, on average.

**Figure 2: Distribution of ACT scores before and after GUI 2.0**



## 6. ACCOMPLISHMENTS, CHALLENGES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To better understand successes and pitfalls of ACT preparation and testing efforts during 11th grade, we undertook two efforts to elicit feedback from GUI 2.0 coaches and school personnel directly involved. At the end of 11th grade, school staff were surveyed on accomplishments and opportunities for improvement for the purpose of annual reporting to the U.S. Department of Education. We reviewed these responses and extracted all mentions of ACT-related activities. In addition, we administered a separate, specific survey of school personnel most closely involved in the administration of ACT activities to determine the nature of services provided, materials used to support student performance, student participation in services, and logistical issues around communication, attitudes toward services, program support, and implementation of services. Responses from both surveys were combined and examined for accomplishments, challenges, and recommendations for future implementation of ACT preparation activities. Finally, procedural challenges and successes experienced at the administrative level of Iowa College Aid are included below.

### 6.1 Accomplishments

Not surprisingly, the most frequent success noted by school personnel was the increased number of students who took the ACT. Many respondents expressed great excitement about the large gains in number of students taking the ACT, as well as noting that without the GUI 2.0 effort many of their students would not have completed the ACT. The second most frequent accomplishment involved school personnel witnessing individual students improve their test performance. Specifically, respondents described students who actively engaged in test preparation services and experienced improvement from the practice test to the actual ACT. This outcome also elicited tremendously positive reactions from teachers, counselors, and GUI 2.0 coaches.

Several respondents reported positive experiences with the CES test preparation training and materials. One stated “We trained 7 content area teachers on the CES test and how to utilize that for test prep for the ACT,” and another said, “The training was good and easy to follow.” Others noted, “Several teachers were very excited to help facilitate prep” and “They were very helpful in helping us understand the tools and creating a plan to access them in our environment.” Conversely, a couple of respondents noted that the study book was overwhelming to their students and that they used test prep materials from previous years.

The opportunity to take the pre-ACT or an ACT practice test was a success noted by several respondents. Giving students a preview of the ACT and the opportunity to identify gaps were the most common examples. One person noted, “The students were able to get refreshers in English, Math, Science, and Reading.” Another stated in regard to the practice test, “This event alone increased the expectations for the students and their families.”

Several other positive outcomes were noted by staff. One person described how their students were more confident as they approached the ACT. Another stated that their students expressed greater expectations for themselves with respect to how they would perform on the ACT and that these expectations were backed up by their actual performance. Finally, another person indicated that after taking the ACT several students engaged in different conversations around what efforts they would need to make to get into college and how to take more challenging coursework during senior year.

### 6.2 Challenges

By far the most frequently cited challenge was lack of student engagement in ACT preparation activities. Multiple respondents indicated great excitement from students and reported that many students signed up for services (Saturday tutoring sessions, after-school sessions, optional opportunities offered during flex or open times during the day), but the actual number who followed through was much lower. One person described students’ attitude that studying for a few days

before the actual exam was all that was required and that spending time on practice tests and studying areas of weakness months in advance did not seem necessary. Not surprisingly, several respondents noted that students who did attend these offered events tended to experience improvement in their scores.

A few respondents indicated that lack of support among others in the building was a challenge, including teachers and administrators not being excited or emphasizing ACT preparation activities. One person who expressed lack of support noted that administrators were often putting out “fires” that got in the way of supporting testing and test prep efforts. As noted below, quite a few school personnel expressed excitement and demonstrated support for these efforts, but this was not a universal experience for GUI 2.0 coaches and counselors.

Having enough time to spend on ACT preparation activities during the school day was mentioned as a challenge by some respondents. This problem was exacerbated by delays in Iowa College Aid’s ability to approve a contract with CES. Instead of being offered prior to the start of 11th grade, the practice test occurred after the school year started and school schedules were finalized, leaving little room for test preparation services. Had the data from the pre-test been available sooner, there would have been data to support the need for ACT test preparation. Interestingly, one person stated that there was sufficient time to spend on prep but that commitment to the intervention was lacking among some staff.

### 6.3 Future Recommendations

***Build support for ACT prep and districtwide testing.*** There were two different responses with respect to support for these activities. Some respondents reported a great deal of support from teachers, counselors, and administrators for providing ACT prep activities during or after school as well as facilitating testing at school during the week. In addition, several respondents noted that these efforts have been or were likely to be sustained after the GUI 2.0 cohort completed 11th grade. At the same time, others noted that a lack of building-wide support was a challenge. Future endeavors should devote time to creating a culture and districtwide practices that promote college access activities such as the ACT.

***Emphasize flexibility of test prep services.*** Several respondents described successes in offering varying types of services as well as a wide variety of modalities for supporting students. Some respondents described success with more engaging test prep materials found on ACT.org. Others noted that opportunities during school, after school, and on Saturdays were helpful, particularly among students who chose to attend. Several noted success around integrating brief activities such as 5-minute test tips or review items into regular class meetings as a way to deliver content to students (for example, “We saw our best success when we had teachers incorporate ACT prep activities into regular class time”).

***Increase student engagement.*** Given that student utilization of offered services was the biggest challenge identified by staff, future efforts should emphasize the importance and value of preparing for and completing the ACT. Messaging for the ACT could begin earlier in the program to increase students’ perception that the ACT is a normal part of the college preparation process. The GUI 2.0 program has demonstrated strong outcomes in increasing students’ expectations that they will complete college after high school. Additional efforts to inform students about the importance of the ACT in this process might increase engagement. In addition, GUI staff should begin planning even earlier to engage school personnel in determining what types of activities are more likely to engage students in their specific setting.

***Expand students served.*** One respondent indicated directly, and several others implied indirectly, that the students who most need ACT prep services—likely first-generation or lower socioeconomic status, possibly students of color—were less likely to take part in services. This issue is also reflected in Table 2, which shows lower participation rates for minority and low-income students. Given the goal of GEAR UP Iowa to specifically support underserved students, future efforts should include messaging that encourages all students to participate in services and challenges school staff to ensure that every student in the building hears the message that taking the ACT is for them.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

There is no doubt that GUI 2.0 had a large effect on the number of students who completed the ACT. This was done by requiring GUI 2.0 partners to offer districtwide ACT testing that occurred during the school day and was free for students. Access to the ACT not only helped students accomplish a step that is important for college enrollment, but also allowed students to see their potential. For instance, an additional 100 students tested as eligible to attend a Regent university in Iowa, compared to the past few years.

In addition to providing access to the ACT exam, GUI 2.0 helped students succeed by administering a practice test, which improved scores by approximately half a point. The largest effects were seen when students took part in both the pre-test and the test preparation services, with a typical gain on the composite score of 0.7 points. Unfortunately, few students participated in both the pre-test and test preparation due to issues with scheduling and a lack of enthusiasm, either among school staff or among students.

Our recommendation for future emphasis on the ACT is to start planning early. If GEAR UP Iowa develops flexible, engaging test preparation services and starts conversations with school personnel from the beginning, students will have the potential to benefit significantly from exposure to ACT material.

## 8. REFERENCES

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# GEAR UP Iowa: ACT Initiatives and Outcomes

# Why Take the ACT?

- Meets entrance requirement for many institutions but also....
  - Allows institutions to reach out and provide assistance to interested students
  - Fulfills requirement of a placement test for community colleges
  - Helps students realize their potential and enroll in an appropriately selective institution

# Why Provide ACT Services to GEAR UP Iowa Students?

- Access to the ACT exam is often limited for low-income students due to...
  - Difficulty attending an exam administered on the weekend
  - Lack of information regarding fee waivers
- Approaches to make the ACT accessible to all...
  - State-wide testing (Hurtwitz et al., 2015; Hyman, 2017; Klasik, 2013)
    - Maine increased postsecondary enrollment by 2 to 3 percentage points.
    - Michigan increased college enrollment by 0.6 percentage points, 1.2 percentage points for low income students.
    - Three states saw enrollment shift from two-year to four-year institutions.
  - Practice exams with targeted tutoring (Filizola, 2008; McMann, 1994)
    - Increased final ACT exam scores

# GEAR UP Iowa ACT Services

- ACT Pre-Test
  - GEAR UP Iowa (GUI) contracted with Cambridge Educational Services (CES) to provide a practice ACT exam.
- ACT Test Preparation
  - CES trained high school personnel to read data provided by the pre-test and provide targeted tutoring in areas identified as in need of improvement.
- ACT Districtwide Testing
  - GUI required all partner schools to implement district wide ACT testing, paid for by GUI and administered during the school day.

# Participation in GUI ACT Services

	Completed ACT practice test	ACT in-person test prep participation	Average hours	Completed ACT exam	GUI population
All GEAR UP	2,841 (41%)	1068 (15%)	6.8	4,881 (70%)	7,008
Cedar Rapids	314 (27%)	143 (12%)	2.0	829 (71%)	1,175
Clinton	74 (36%)	78 (38%)	8.0	97 (47%)	206
Columbus	40 (83%)	45 (94%)	1.4	39 (81%)	48
Davenport	464 (54%)	118 (14%)	1.2	552 (65%)	854
Denison	183 (90%)	152 (75%)	14.1	148 (73%)	204
Des Moines	296 (13%)	353 (16%)	8.9	1,706 (75%)	2,278
Fort Dodge	184 (67%)	22 (8%)	4.5	191 (70%)	274
Marshalltown	137 (37%)	0 (0%)	0	160 (43%)	371
Ottumwa	145 (49%)	22 (7%)	4.5	230 (78%)	296
Perry	157 (95%)	0 (0%)	0	142 (86%)	166
Sioux City	714 (72%)	130 (13%)	5.1	663 (67%)	990
Storm Lake	133 (91%)	<10	4.0	124 (85%)	146

# Participation by Student Demographics

	Completed ACT practice test	ACT in-person test prep participation	Average hours	Completed ACT exam	N
<b>All GEAR UP</b>	2,841 (41%)	1,068 (15%)	6.8	4,881 (70%)	7,008
<b>GENDER</b>					
Female	1,481 (44%)	613 (18%)	6.6	2,476 (74%)	3,356
Male	1,360 (37%)	455 (12%)	6.2	2,405 (66%)	3,652
<b>RACE/ETHNICITY</b>					
Asian	147 (41%)	80 (23%)	7.7	308 (87%)	355
Black or African American	244 (25%)	122 (13%)	6.2	586 (61%)	968
Latinx	813 (46%)	274 (15%)	6.3	1,184 (66%)	1,781
Multiple	120 (33%)	50 (14%)	4.7	231 (64%)	359
White	1,497 (43%)	537 (15%)	5.5	2,540 (73%)	3,471
Other	20 (27%)	<10	-	32 (43%)	74
<b>FRPL</b>					
Yes	1,735 (34%)	693 (14%)	7.6	3,249 (65%)	5,038
No	1,106 (56%)	375 (19%)	5.4	1,632 (83%)	1,970
<b>IEP</b>					
Yes	226 (24%)	58 (6%)	5.9	421 (44%)	960
No	2,615 (43%)	1,010 (17%)	6.9	4,460 (74%)	6,048
<b>ESL</b>					
Yes	289 (31%)	140 (15%)	1.9	562 (59%)	946
No	2,552 (42%)	928 (15%)	6.2	4,319 (71%)	6,062

# ACT Service Outcomes: Pre-test and test preparation

- Data Sources
  - Iowa College Aid - GUI service participation, student demographics
  - CES - Scores on pre-test, online test preparation usage
  - ACT - Scores on final ACT exam
- Methods
  - Linear regression model of final ACT scores, including demographic and service participation data

# ACT Service Outcomes: Pre-test and test preparation

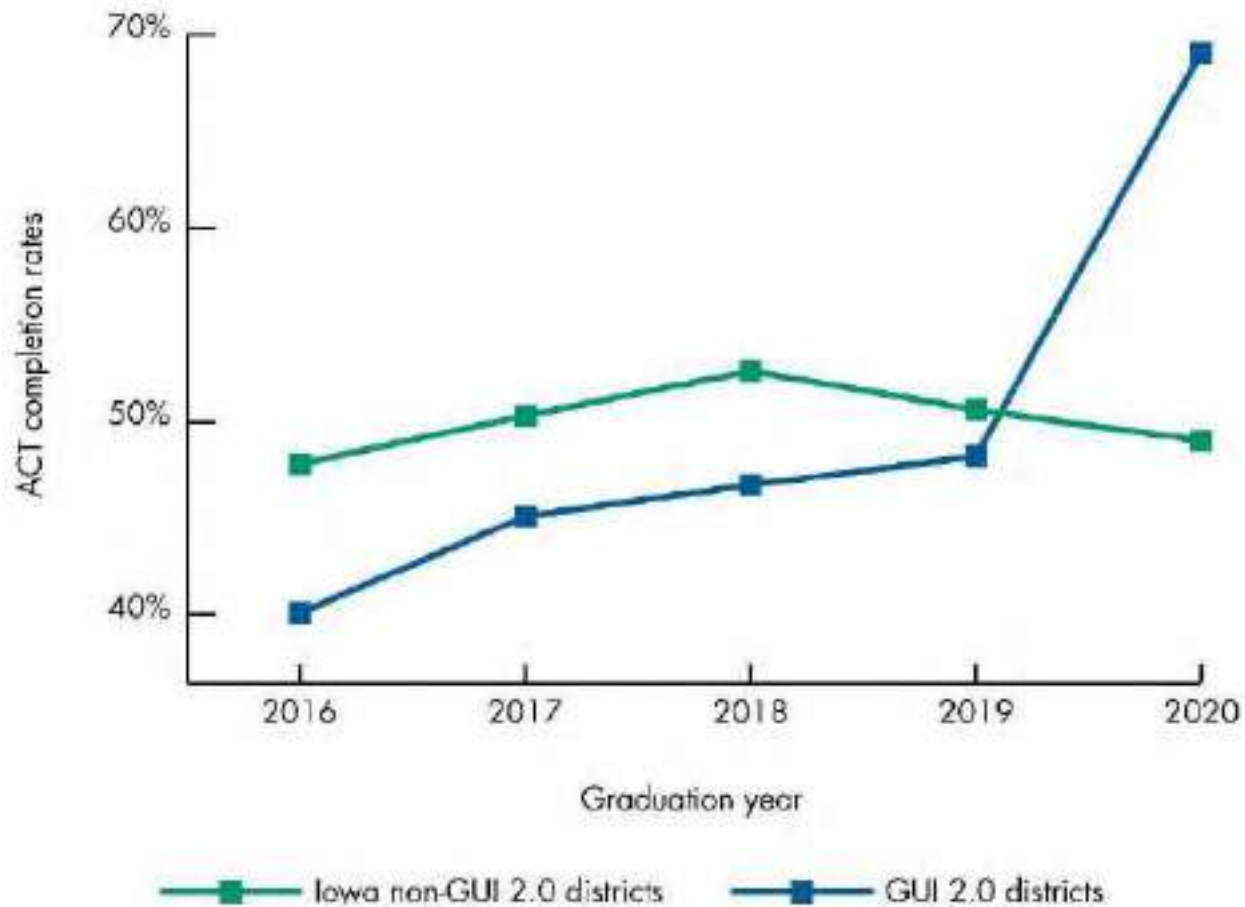
	English	Math	Reading	Science	Composite
Pre-ACT	.447* (.184)	.156 (.147)	.456* (.203)	.581** (.176)	.408** (.146)
Test Preparation	-.058 (.281)	-.056 (.803)	-.256 (.309)	-.050 (.268)	-.074 (.223)
Pre-ACT and Test Preparation	1.317*** (.345)	.416 (.276)	.728 (.380)	.529 (.329)	.731** (.274)
Note: *p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001					

- Results
  - Participating in test preparation services alone did not increase ACT subject or composite scores.
  - Taking the pre-act exam increased scores in all subjects (except math) by approximately 0.5 points, as well as 0.4 points on the composite score.
  - Large increases in English and composite scores were observed for those who took the ACT pre-test and received in person-test preparation.

# ACT Service Outcomes: District wide testing

- Data Sources
  - Iowa College Aid - Student demographics
  - ACT - Completion of the ACT exam for all Iowans
  - Iowa Department of Education (IDE) - State-wide high school senior enrollment for 2016-2020, including student demographics
- Methods
  - Difference-in-differences model of ACT completion status
  - Compared trends in ACT completion rates for GUI and non-GUI districts
  - Matched ACT exam records to IDE enrollment files on name and date of birth

# ACT Service Outcomes: Districtwide testing



# ACT Service Outcomes: District wide testing

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
GUI 2.0 District	-1.105*** (.163)	-1.097*** (.163)	-.391* (.183)
Class of 2020	-.069*** (.014)	-.204*** (.019)	-.313*** (.020)
GUI 2.0 District x Class of 2020	1.150*** (.033)	1.148*** (.033)	1.390*** (.041)
Average marginal effect (GUI 2.0 District x Class of 2020)	.265*** (.007)	.265*** (.007)	.269*** (.008)
Graduation Year (linear)		.054*** (.005)	.062*** (.005)
Asian			.368*** (.038)
Black			-.351*** (.029)
Latinx			-.445*** (.023)
Multiple Races or Ethnicities			-.119*** (.034)
Native American			-.707*** (.100)
Pacific Islander			-.742*** (.137)
FRPL			-1.237*** (.013)
ESL			-1.067*** (.043)
IEP			-2.206*** (.025)
Female			.575*** (.011)

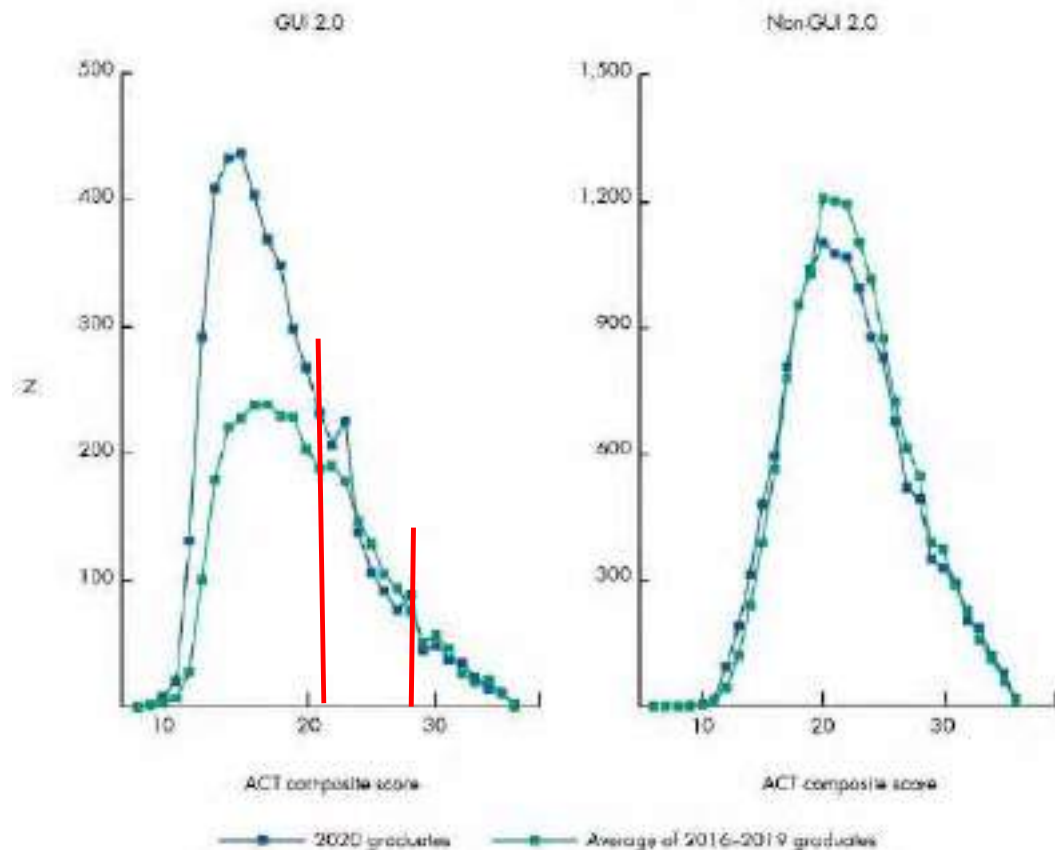
Note: \*p < .05 \*\*p < .01 \*\*\*p < .001

- Results
  - GUI increased the ACT completion rate by 27 percentage points.

# ACT Service Outcomes: District wide testing

- Approximately 100 more GUI students tested as eligible for Regent Universities, compared to the average number of 2016-2019 graduates.

Figure 2: Distribution of ACT scores before and after GUI 2.0



# Accomplishments

- Largest accomplishment, as shown by data and noted by school personnel, was the number of students who completed the ACT exam who wouldn't have done so without GUI.
- School personnel reported positive experiences with CES training materials; however, some reported preferring previously used preparation materials.
- The pre-ACT was shown to increase student scores. In addition *"This event alone increased the expectations for the students and their families."*
- School personnel reported that students felt more confident, had higher expectations for their ACT performance and were more engaged in discussions around completing steps needed to enroll in college.

# Challenges

- The biggest challenge was lack of engagement, especially among low-income and minority populations.
- School personnel indicated that lack of support in the building was a challenge, with little enthusiasm from some teachers and administrators.
- The time commitment was difficult to accommodate, especially due to the delay in approving a contract with CES. Services that were supposed to occur prior to the start of 11<sup>th</sup> grade did not and schools had trouble fitting them into their schedules in the fall.

# Future Recommendations

- Build support for ACT prep and district wide testing
- Emphasize flexibility of test prep services
- Increase student engagement
- Expand students served

# **IOWA COLLEGE STUDENT AID COMMISSION**

## **Audit and Finance Committee Report**

**November 2020**

The Audit and Finance Committee met prior to the Commission Meeting. Committee Chair, Commissioner Fitzgibbon, will provide a report to the Commission.

# **IOWA COLLEGE STUDENT AID COMMISSION**

## **Legislative Committee Report**

**November 2020**

The Legislative Committee met prior to the Commission Meeting. Committee Chair, Commissioners Ash, will provide a report to the Commission.